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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Fourth Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Quatrième session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 11 June 2003

Mercredi 11 juin 2003



Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 11 June 2003

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ST ANTHONY'S PARISH

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): It's with a great deal of pride that I stand here today and offer our congratulations to St Anthony's parish on its 50th anniversary celebration, la festa del cinquante anniversario. This parish has been the bedrock of consistency and comfort for people of all ages in Sudbury. The parish has provided consistency, comfort, refuge and a place of spiritual guidance and renewal. For parishioners of St Anthony's, it has been the foundation and cornerstone of our faith, hope and the values we hold dear.

Their celebrations start tonight with a tridium at the church. That will continue until Friday, when there will be the annual St Anthony's Festival. There will be the mass and then the traditional distribution of the holy bread. On Saturday, they will celebrate their 50th anniversary with a mass and a gala dinner and dance at the Caruso Club. On Sunday, we will have our traditional St Anthony's Festival. After mass, there will be a parade through the streets of Gatchell, and then there will be fun and games for people of all ages.

I'd like to congratulate Father Rodgers and Rita Verilli, the chair of the parish council, for their hard work in planning this very special time. St Anthony's community has helped build Gatchell and Sudbury and made it a very strong place. We are proud of what that community has done for our community, and so, together, all of us in this House and the constituents of Sudbury say auguri, congratulations.

FIRE IN DELHI

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): On the evening of Tuesday, May 27, more than 50 firefighters from six Norfolk county fire stations converged on Delhi as a warehouse blaze shot flames 200 feet in the air and filled the sky with black smoke. Firefighters, construction companies and others in the community spent the better part of two days battling the fire, fuelled by 1,500 bales. Some 4,500 feet of irrigation pipe had to be laid to supply extra water.

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 11 juin 2003

In recent years, we've all been reminded of the selfless efforts and heroic dedication of our emergency service workers, and we're all grateful for the protection they provide. We owe them a debt of thanks.

I'd like to point out that, as in many rural communities, our fire departments are primarily volunteers. I'd also like to make note that this past weekend marked the retirement of a volunteer with the Vittoria fire department. Jim Melville is hanging up his suspenders after 36 years, give or take, of dedicated service.

At this time, I would like to express my sincere thanks to all those emergency workers, firefighters, police officers, county personnel, Ministry of the Environment workers and private companies that were at the scene and involved in the battle, a battle that our local paper dubbed the "Delhi inferno." These people continue to ensure the safety of Norfolk county.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): As the cost of dealing with unanticipated as well as expected health concerns continues to rise, as disability pensions remain capped at 1993 rates, as the Ministry of the Environment scrambles to find enough staff and financial resources to protect the fragile ecosystem, as municipalities are forced to raise property taxes and cut services to meet new burdensome costs from the downloading of provincial responsibilities, as nursing home patients are forced to pay even more for badly underfunded services, the Eves Conservatives have an endless supply of taxpayer dollars to squander on self-congratulatory, blatantly partisan advertising on television and radio, in newspapers and magazines, and on glossy self-promoting pamphlets mailed to every Ontario home. Whether warning people about the dangers of SARS or the West Nile virus, urging people to buy Ontario government bonds, or promoting education or health programs, the Eves government injects a strong dose of partisanship into each and every ad and sends the bill to Ontario taxpayers.

Members of the Ontario Legislature will have an opportunity to put an end to this abuse of public office, an abuse of taxpayers, by passing the Preventing Partisan Advertising Act, 2003, which I have presented to the Legislature to be debated and voted upon tomorrow morning. The Tory ad agencies that make millions of dollars from the taxpayers may be disappointed, but hard-working Ontario taxpayers will thank this Legislature for passing my bill.

IRMA BURMAN

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I rise today to pay tribute to an outstanding individual who recently passed away in Scarborough. Irma Burman was born on April 30, 1917, on a farm in Thorold, Ontario. Her maiden name was Kuhnelt and she was the youngest of five children, I am told. I am also told that Irma was always an adventurous young lady.

Irma moved to Springfield, Massachusetts, in 1927 with her family, and returned to Canada in 1935, settling in Toronto, where she started a career in the restaurant business and catering. She married Walter in 1947, and in 1949 their first son, Jon, was born. In 1955, Irma won the Irish Sweepstakes and used the proceeds, \$2,000, for a downpayment on the family's first home at 75 Fenwood Heights. Her son Bart was born in 1959, two years prior to the purchase of the family's current home on Centennial Road, more recently known as Tall Pines Court.

Subsequently, throughout the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, Irma worked tirelessly for the preservation of the Rouge Valley, Meadowvale pond and Centennial swamp. Back in those years, it was an exploding community, with new homes and subdivisions. Irma's main interests were in planning and environmental issues. She was helpful throughout the years to her many friends and neighbours and stayed active and interested in political issues that affected her friends and neighbours. Irma Burman was an outstanding individual and a role model for many.

I stand today to pay tribute to Irma and the many accomplishments of her lifetime. She will be missed.

1340

MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): Contrary to the claims of Chris Stockwell, I don't believe it is common practice to use riding association money to pay for family vacations. In fact, this is a complete abuse of a privilege members have, whereby riding associations can assist members with political expenses.

Fundraising is a necessary and, for me, the least-liked aspect of the political process, but I take the process very seriously. When supporters decide to offer financial support, they do so because they believe in what I stand for and the issues that I work on. Their expectation is that the money they contribute will be used for direct political purposes, primarily to fund political campaigns. When holding a fundraising reception, I explain how raising money is a necessary part of our democratic political system and I thank them for contributing to the process. I believe that the expectations of my contributors are that their donations will be used to further my political career and will not be used for personal purposes. I can't imagine the reaction if, after an event, after thanking everyone for their contributions, I let them know that it's my intention to use the money to finance a luxury family

trip to Europe. I don't believe anyone in the room would approve of that expenditure.

As elected officials, we have many financial resources available to us to carry out our duties. When any one of us abuses those privileges, it brings contempt upon our democratic system. Shame on you, Mr Stockwell.

SARS

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): SARS continues to wreak havoc on Ontarians and Ontario, yet not a penny from the federal Liberals in support to aid in addressing the impact that SARS has had on people's lives and on communities here in Ontario. What do we get from the federal Liberals? A taxpayer-funded Rolling Stones concert. Let me tell you, there are nurses out there who have been telling this government and telling anyone who will listen that they need adequate protective gear. There are nurses out there who have been loud and clear about needing more staffing because nurses have been run ragged, along with other health professionals, as they respond front-line, at great risk to themselves, to the SARS crisis.

Yet the federal Liberals give us a taxpayer-funded Rolling Stones concert. I was shocked this morning to see that, yes, the province of Ontario has joined the bandwagon, the Globe and Mail reporting that it's throwing \$2 million into that hopper as well.

Let me tell you, where I come from folks have no interest whatsoever in this type of circus in response to real crisis. They have no interest in seeing their tax money wasted on a Rolling Stones concert when those tax dollars should be invested in rebuilding the health care system.

By the way, I say to the government: Rolling Stones? Why don't you give Walter Ostanek a call, Canada's polka king down in St Catharines? You could probably persuade him to do it for free, and he has had more Grammy nominations and awards than the Rolling Stones ever have.

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): I rise today to tell my fellow members about how this government is investing in fish and wildlife in my great riding of Perth-Middlesex.

On behalf of the Honourable Jerry Ouellette, our hard-working Minister of Natural Resources, I announced \$60,000 worth of provincial funding for projects which will rehabilitate fish and wildlife habitats and encourage outdoor recreation. This funding was provided under Ontario's Living Legacy fish and wildlife protection and enhancement program.

The municipality of West Perth and the Mitchell wetlands committee are each receiving \$15,000 to help rehabilitate the former Mitchell sewage lagoons. The decommissioned sewage lagoons in Mitchell will be converted into approximately 50 acres of managed wetlands,

which will create habitat for migratory shorebirds. As well, Local Outdoors Opportunities Partners, known as LOOP for short, is receiving \$30,000. This money will help fund a water study on Trout Creek, the only remaining cold water stream in Perth county, and the reforestation of sites in Perth and Huron counties. As well, one third of LOOP's funding will go toward encouraging Perth county's youth to try fishing and outdoor activities at events like this Saturday's Youth Day, hosted by the Mitchell Fish and Game Club.

These are just a few of the more than 800 fish and wildlife projects which have received funding from Ontario's Living Legacy, the largest natural heritage program in provincial history.

BSE

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): It appears as if our Minister of Agriculture is now taking lessons from the Chris Stockwell school of deny everything, and if all else fails, call a reporter with a long-standing history of integrity a liar.

Monday morning's Canadian Press story by Colin Perkel regarding Ontario meat inspectors reports an interview with Dr Tom Baker, the head of the ministry's food inspection branch. Dr Baker confirmed in this interview that at least one third of the inspectors in this province lacked specific BSE training.

The Minister of Agriculture has her people running around for two days figuring out how to spin this, and all she can come up with is to accuse Perkel of false and inaccurate reporting.

The internal e-mails out of this ministry speak for themselves. I've got those e-mails right here. Cora Castro, project coordinator, meat inspection, e-mails out to inspection managers on May 27, 2003, asking for names of inspectors who have not had the BSE training done a couple of years ago. This e-mail was marked high priority—no kidding. Here's another from an area inspection manager desperately trying to find out who hasn't had BSE training. They don't even know who has and has not been trained.

Colin Perkel is a tough but honest reporter who has taken shots at all of us. His integrity, though, has never come into question. Shame on the Minister of Agriculture for suggesting otherwise. The evidence speaks for itself. Mr Perkel is not the one making false and misleading statements.

TIM HORTONS CAMP DAY

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): This morning I was able to spend some time in my beautiful riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka. I was there to participate in the Tim Hortons Camp Day. Today Tim Hortons stores are celebrating their annual Camp Day fundraiser. This is the single largest fundraiser for the Tim Horton Children's Foundation, and spans more than 2,200 Tim

Hortons stores in Canada and 160 stores in the United States.

Buy a cup of coffee today and help to send more than 9,000 kids, who could otherwise not afford it, on the camping adventure of a lifetime.

Last year, thanks to the support of their customers, Tim Hortons raised \$4.8 million in 24 hours. This money has allowed more than 54,000 children and youth since 1974 to attend a foundation camp, including the Tim Hortons camp in the Parry Sound district.

These children are selected from local communities by store owners, in conjunction with local organizations. The success would not be possible without the store owners and staff.

Today I was at the store in Gravenhurst with the owners, Jeff and Patty Watson, and their staff to help pour coffee and greet customers. They had a great crowd of people coming through the store supporting the event. The Watsons' store is one of many participating in this important event in my riding. Dave and Tim Gibson's stores in Parry Sound and Nobel, and Larry Greenwood's stores in Huntsville and Bracebridge are also donating their entire coffee proceeds.

Tim Hortons Camp Day is a great event and I was happy to be there to help support this charity. I would like to encourage you all to support Tim Hortons and Camp Day throughout the province today.

Congratulations and thanks to Tim Hortons staff for their dedication to a very worthwhile charity.

VISITORS

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In the gallery today is Helena Nielsen, who is the former school trustee for Scarborough. She is joined by Anny Schmid-Gauss, who is the daughter of the former mayor of Braunsdorf, Austria, and is accompanied by her husband, Gunter Schmid, both visiting from Austria.

ANNUAL REPORT, INFORMATION AND PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I beg to inform the House that today I've laid upon the table the 2002 Annual Report of the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intend-

ed appointments dated June 11, 2003, of the standing committee on government agencies.

Pursuant to standing order 106(e), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on regulations and private bills and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill Pr21, An Act respecting Tyndale College & Seminary (formerly Ontario Bible College and Ontario Theological Seminary).

Your committee recommends that Bill Pr6, An Act respecting the Society of Professional Accountants of Ontario, be not reported.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

1350

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ELECTION AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI ÉLECTORALE

Mr Conway moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 94, An Act to amend the Election Act, 2003 /
Projet de loi 94, Loi modifiant la Loi électorale.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): With an eye to the political calendar here in Ontario, I thought it was time for me, and on behalf of my friend Mr Bradley, to introduce a bill that is very simple. It would require that in future Ontario provincial general elections the ballot set out not just the names of the candidates but the political affiliation of said candidates.

PIPELINE EXCAVATION SAFETY AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ ET LA RESPONSABILISATION RELATIVES À L'EXCAVATION DE PIPELINES

Mr Sergio moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 95, An Act to provide for greater safety and accountability in pipeline excavations and to amend the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000 to require annual reports in the pipeline sector and to increase penalties for offences under the Act / Projet de loi 95, Loi

prévoyant une sécurité et une responsabilisation accrues en matière d'excavation de pipelines et modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes techniques et la sécurité afin d'exiger la présentation de rapports annuels dans le secteur des pipelines et d'augmenter les peines imposées pour les infractions à la Loi.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): This bill calls for enhanced rules with respect to activities or excavations that may interfere with pipeline that is used for transmission or distribution of oil and gas. This act would provide for greater safety and accountability in pipeline excavations and would amend the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000, to require annual reports in the pipeline sector and to increase penalties for offences under the act. The short title is the Pipeline Excavation Safety and Accountability Act, 2003.

This bill follows the tragic deaths of eight Ontarians as a result of an explosion at a Toronto west-end strip mall last April. The deadly explosion occurred while a road crew was digging up a sidewalk and a backhoe accidentally struck a buried gas line. Within days, another person was killed in Windsor due to a powerful gas explosion and three other victims were injured.

There needs to be a commitment to reduce the hazards that are often caused by human error or by digging too close to gas pipelines. I believe we have a responsibility to protect the public and to make gas pipelines safe. If my bill is approved by the Legislature, we can reduce the chance of another incident and loss of lives.

MACDONALD-CARTIER FREEWAY ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR L'AUTOROUTE MACDONALD-CARTIER

Mr Lalonde moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 96, An Act to amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act to officially recognize Highway 401 as the Macdonald-Cartier Freeway / Projet de loi 96, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement des voies publiques et des transports en commun afin de reconnaître officiellement l'autoroute 401 comme l'Auto-route Macdonald-Cartier.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): Highway 401 was named the Macdonald-Cartier Freeway in 1965 by Premier John Robarts to honour two fathers of Confederation, Sir John A. Macdonald and Sir George-Étienne Cartier. The name "Macdonald-Cartier Freeway" has never been formally designated in legislation.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs): First, I'd like to congratulate francophone affairs for being once again 100% from the privacy commissioner.

I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Baird: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following changes be made to the ballot list for private members' public business:

Mrs Boyer and Mr Colle exchange places in order of precedence such that Mrs Boyer assumes ballot item number 20 and Mr Colle assumes ballot item number 17.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

ORAL QUESTIONS

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Ms Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): My question is for the Chair of Management Board. I'd like to return to the matter of your largest fundraiser giving your largest donor highly unusual assistance with pension money.

But before I do, I have a question for you. Mario Cortellucci isn't just the biggest donor; he also happens to be a fundraiser himself. Minister, I'd like you to tell us if you think it's appropriate for you to be the judge and jury in this case when you yourself raised over \$128,000 at fundraisers held by Mr Cortellucci and his brother at his banquet hall.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture): First of all, I'm not the judge and jury here. The fact of the matter is, the matter was reported back to me by my deputy minister, and a report came back from the general counsel. So we have looked at the process, we think it's appropriate, and that's the end of the story.

Ms Pupatello: Minister, we know you've done well by Mario Cortellucci. Raising \$120,000 is a lot of work, and perhaps you feel you owe him. It's interesting that the Cortellucci hall is absolutely nowhere near Markham, which is your riding.

I know Ernie Eves and the PC Party have done well by Mario Cortellucci; more than \$1 million is a lot of money. But I'd like to ask you about your top fundraiser, Mr Don Weiss. So far you've refused to offer details about the operation of the Ontario Pension Board since

you appointed Don Weiss as chair. Can you tell us why Don Weiss's salary was increased by 67% in 2001, at a time when the pension board had its worst performance in five years?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: First of all, if we look at things on a rational basis, as I said before, the Ontario pension fund is the only major pension fund that actually made money over their past performance, where the average loss of public sector pension funds has been in the neighbourhood of about 5%. So clearly the member is wrong in that.

Secondly, with respect to process, which she was asking originally before she got on to this other stuff, frankly, the authority to make all these type of investments—I have been part of the process; I have talked about it. It's been that way since 1991 and there has been no change.

1400

Ms Pupatello: The information is found in the annual report of the Ontario Pension Board. The pension board's annual report states that the year after Don Weiss took over was the worst performance in half a decade, but he gave himself a 67% increase in salary anyway.

We know you appointed Don Weiss to head the pension board. We know he worked as a fundraiser for the PC Party while he was on the board. We know he lent millions of dollars to your top donor. No one can explain the decision of the Ontario Pension Board about the operation of the pension board.

I'm wondering if you can explain something else. Why did Don Weiss, since he has become chair of the Ontario Pension Board, cut the spending on audits there by 40%? Why is there 40% less spending on the auditing of investments under your top fundraiser?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: It's nice if we could deal with some facts, again. Let's return to the facts for a second. The member again is talking about whether the pension fund has been successful or not. Frankly, as I said, it's the only major public sector pension fund that actually made money.

If I can return to that again, if we look at the plan's 10-year rate of return to December 31, 2002, it averaged 9.86% per annum. Clearly the fund is performing. Clearly we have processes—I have been continually saying this for about a week—with respect to the authority that actually makes these investments. I believe the process is there; the process has been followed.

As much as the member over there wants to try to smear people, I would suggest that if she had any guts at all, she'd say that outside of the House. Maybe some of the members of the media might ask her about her specific allegations outside of the House and let her explain those and stand by those statements.

MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): My question is to the government House leader. Yesterday it was revealed for the first time that in fact your family's expenses for

the European trip were picked up by the riding association of Etobicoke Centre. You said yesterday, "It was a trip to Europe and they"—the riding association—"agreed to pay. They raised the money." That's not what was said last week. Last week you said of your family's expenses, "I just paid for it myself. I paid them personally."

This is a serious discrepancy, and it strikes at the heart of the accountability and credibility of the story and of the minister. We get version 1 one week and a different version the next week. What are we to believe?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): If you check the records from Hansard, I said the government didn't pay. I can understand that to some degree it was confusing. I certainly apologize, but it was fully an intention that I pay for some personally, the riding association files and they pay for others.

The only reason I didn't respond to that is because you didn't ask the question. Had you asked the question, I would have told you that.

Mr Bryant: Speaking of the Hansard, in one of the supplementaries I said that my "question is not about the attendance of your family. The member said that he paid for those expenses, and I take the honourable member at his word." You said that you paid for those expenses, and I took you at your word. You did not stand up and correct the record. I said in the supplementary that you paid for those expenses and I said that I took you at your word.

Why did you not correct the record? Everybody in this House was led to believe that you picked up those expenses, and I took you at your word. We have to be able to take members at their word. Why, when I stated those facts, did you not correct the record?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I sincerely apologize for not correcting the member's record.

Mr Bryant: I say to the minister, clearly the people of Ontario were led to believe last week that the entirety of your personal expenses and family expenses were picked up by you. Not only is this leaving facts out, but this is a matter of people being led to believe that your family's expenses were picked up by you, and that was simply not the case. Now we hear corrections and apologies.

There is one way to begin to get to the bottom of this, and that is for you to release all your expenses and receipts so that we can see who paid for what on this most infamous European excursion. If you duck this opportunity to release all the information and all the facts, it will speak volumes. Will you release the records?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I think the question is somewhat unfair with respect to correcting your record. I mean, if that's what you said—you may have said that; I didn't say that.

Secondly, you're talking about the expenses for my family with respect to a trip. Let me cast your mind back to June 25, 2002. Mr McGuinty, the leader of your party, was asked about \$17,000 he billed the taxpayers for his family travel. He billed \$17,000 to taxpayers.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Let me finish.

He said he wasn't going to pay it back; he thought his family should be with him. I didn't quibble with him. I understand that this job can be demanding and difficult. I did not quibble with the leader of the official opposition, and he spent \$17,000 of taxpayers' money on family travel.

The difference between what I did and what Mr McGuinty did was that I didn't charge the taxpayers; I charged my riding association. So what I hear you saying to me is, it's OK for Mr McGuinty to charge the taxpayers for his family travel, but it's not OK for me to charge the riding association for my family travel.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): New question?

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): To the Minister of the Environment, yesterday's Hansard has you saying "I paid those bills." The June 5 Hansard has you saying, "I said that because we had trouble connecting to Rome, and extended the trip, that's when we decided to pay." Yesterday, the Globe and Mail quotes you as saying, "I paid my own hotel expenditures."

But, Minister, why is it OK to call upon taxpayer-subsidized funds, taxpayer political contributions, subsidized to the tune of 75%—75 cents on the dollar—to travel with your spouse and children through Europe?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I'm truly surprised by the question from the member opposite. I was here a couple of years ago when the very same situation happened with the leader of the third party. He had what I would classify as an emotional meltdown in the lobby outside this House.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Oh, come on.

Hon Mr Stockwell: He did. And I'm not suggesting he shouldn't have. All I'm saying is, he was questioned on how come, in his words, his young family travelled with him at taxpayers' expense. So he said he thought it was OK for his family, at taxpayers' expense, to travel with him. Now you're saying to me, "You did not use taxpayers' money. You used riding association money to pay for your family to travel." I ask you, why is it OK for taxpayers to pay for your leader's family to travel with him, and it's not OK for my riding association to pay for my family to travel with me?

1410

Mr Kormos: Minister, your family travelled with you on a luxurious, five-star tour of Rome, Paris, London and Glasgow.

Why did you say, "I paid those bills," when in fact those bills weren't paid by you but were paid by your riding association with taxpayer-subsidized dollars?

Hon Mr Stockwell: You ask me this question. Why don't you ask your own leader?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Take your seat. The member for Windsor West, come to order, please.

Sorry, Minister.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I realize that this is a touchy situation for the opposition, because here you are asking

me about my riding association paying for my family to travel with me on a business trip to Europe, and your leader submits expenses in the tens of thousands of dollars—and I'm not complaining—for his young family to travel with him. The difference is that yours is taxpayers' money and mine is riding association money.

If you have a concern with my riding association paying for my family, you must have an immense concern with the taxpayers paying for your leader's travel.

Mr Kormos: Minister, yesterday you said—and you're quoted in the National Post—"If you think I'm the only person that does that, I'm not. It happens all the time."

Tell us about what that means in terms of riding associations paying for travel through Europe for members' families.

Hon Mr Stockwell: My belief is that riding associations are there to serve the member.

During this period of time, I was Minister of Energy, Minister of the Environment and government House leader. I was working extremely hard and very long. I will take the same defence as your leader took; that's what I'm going to do. I'm going to defend myself the same way your leader did: I'm very, very busy, and if there's time to spend with your family, you take it.

My riding association offered to pay the way for my family. I am not apologizing for that. I don't get enough time as it is in the job that we work with. I will not apologize.

Further, I will say this: I have no truck or quibble with the fact that taxpayers paid for your leader's family to travel, but on the other hand, if you think that's acceptable, then you must accept the fact that a riding association should be able to do the same for the Minister of the Environment, the Minister of Energy and the House leader.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr Kormos: Minister of the Environment, I took note of your observation that it happens all the time, and I took a look at the filings that of course are available in the library and which are well-handled now, but 24 hours after your revelation, and I found a number of instances. Indeed, Lanark-Carleton Conservative riding paid out \$16,500 in living expenses to its member over the course of the last three years. Indeed, Durham riding association: a mere \$500 in member's expenses. Oh, and St Paul's: \$3,500 for member's expenses. Toronto Centre: \$2,000; \$5,000; \$3,000. Hamilton East—

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I think the standing orders are fairly clear that questions may be asked during question period to ministers based on their portfolio. I don't see that this is in compliance.

The Speaker: I'll give him some latitude. He's going to lead up to it, I'm sure. His time is running out.

The member for Niagara Centre.

Mr Kormos: Hamilton East: over \$800 in high-priced meals. But they're pikers compared to you—\$25,000-

plus in taxpayer-funded money to take your wife and kids on a European tour.

Why do you think it's right that taxpayers subsidize your wife and children travelling through Europe, staying in the most expensive hotels and undoubtedly eating at the finest restaurants that Rome, Paris, London and Glasgow have to offer?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I was working. I was working on business for the province of Ontario with respect to energy matters in Europe.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I say to the member opposite, I'm not really sure you should be heckling about what you pay back and what you don't pay back. I will say that to him.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister of Finance, come to order. The minister is very capable of answering for himself. He can't even answer because you're yelling across. I'd appreciate some order. The minister is very capable of answering for himself. Sorry, Minister.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I was working. I was working on business in Europe at the time, representing the province of Ontario. My riding association offered to pay the bill for my family to attend, as the taxpayers pay the bill when your leader and your caucus member travel; they take and pay the bill for family members. I have no truck with that. I have no complaint. I'm trying to make the point, and it seems very clear to me. If you think it's acceptable for taxpayers to pay for family travel for your leader, why are you upset when the riding association, which is not the taxpayer, pays for family travel for a minister?

Mr Kormos: You were gifted over \$25,000 in riding association monies, which are subsidized by the taxpayer up to 75%. There's no record of your declaration of that gift under section 6 of the Members' Integrity Act, as you're required to table that gift with the commissioner. Members' spousal travel is within Ontario. You visited Rome, Paris, London and Glasgow and stayed in some of the most expensive hotels on the taxpayers' tab. Why do you think it's right for the taxpayers to subsidize your spouse and children's travel through the most expensive capitals of Europe?

Hon Mr Stockwell: First of all, that's not true. It was the riding association that paid, and that's the way riding associations work. That's how they raise the money and that's how they spend the money. My executive of the riding association was in total agreement with respect to how this money was spent. That's a decision made between me and my riding association. They were quoted in the paper as saying, "Yes, this is the way we think we can support the minister."

Further, I will say to the member opposite that the decision you're taking here is that this is taxpayers'—not. It is not taxpayers' money. It is raised by the riding association. Finally, if you're so concerned about families travelling with members, why is it you say nothing when tens of thousands of dollars are spent by your leader with

his family travelling with him? I don't know how you can square this circle.

The Speaker: New question?

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): I'd say, as another Toronto member, I find it a bit incredible that you'd bring into question the reputations of members on all sides of the House taking advantage of in-Ontario travel to keep their families together. In attempting to disparage my leader and the leader of the NDP, you've done the same thing to past leaders of your party and current members. The real issue here and what you should apologize for is that you can't keep your story straight.

This isn't the first time that you've used other organizations to hide costs. You did a similar thing as a Metro councillor. In 1989, you spent four days in London and three days in Paris and charged the bill to the taxpayer. But instead of billing it to Metro council, where it would have been public and beside your name, you put the bill through the O'Keefe Centre. A media report at the time stated that under the current policy, the trip—

The Speaker: Order. I'm going to ask the member to withdraw the word "hide." I'm afraid he can't use the words "hide costs" like that.

Mr Smitherman: I withdraw that. And to show your expenses—

The Speaker: I thank the member.

Hon Mr Stockwell: This is just ridiculous.

Mr Duncan: Oh, no, it's not.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Oh, yes, it is. At the time I was travelling, I was chair of the O'Keefe Centre board. I don't even think the question is in order, quite frankly. I was chair of the board for the O'Keefe Centre. I went there on behalf of the O'Keefe Centre and actually worked on behalf of the O'Keefe Centre, and the bill was paid at the O'Keefe Centre. This is bloody ridiculous.

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues): So stand up and apologize.

Mr Smitherman: I'll not do that, Madam Minister. In fact, I think that most Ontarians looking in at this situation—

The Speaker: It's the last warning again for the Minister of Colleges and Universities. I'm not going to have her yell out like that. You start it up every day. I would appreciate your co-operation. Sorry for the interruption, member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale.

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Mr Smitherman: The ridiculous part of this is that there's a pattern here that's been going on and on and on in the form of that member making expenditures outside of the norm.

Last year, you were sensitive about expenses after having to pay back thousands of dollars in bar tabs, so you get OPG to cover your expenses. You were a sharp critic in 1989 of other councillors' travel, so you put your own expenditures through a third party, instead of through your own account.

Minister, your trip in 1989 might not have broken the rules, but it did set a pattern. Why don't you just admit that you have a really bad habit of spending a lot of other people's money, mainly taxpayers', on your habits?

The Speaker: I'll interrupt. As you know, the question needs to relate to the minister's portfolio. What he may or may not have done as a Toronto councillor, I'm afraid, is totally irrelevant. I will give you an opportunity very quickly to rephrase the question; otherwise I'm going to have to move on.

Mr Smitherman: I would ask the minister, why is it that after what went on last year, when serious questions were raised about your habits related to other governmental expenditures, you sought to find yet another loophole to make sure that someone else—taxpayers, at the end of the day—paid for your travel habits?

Hon Mr Stockwell: Let's just see what the Integrity Commissioner says. You can make all the allegations, slandering and smearing comments you want. I think I'd like to see to what the Integrity Commissioner has to say; that will be interesting.

I also ask you, if you're so concerned about taxpayers' money being spent, how come you haven't talked to your leader about \$27,000 he spent at an image consultant in Chicago and Washington? Do you think that was a fair and reasonable expense? Has he paid that back? Do you think that was government business? It's a rather selective approach that you take. You'd better not throw stones when you live in glass houses. This guy blew \$27,000 on an image consultant in the United States. What possible benefit to the taxpayer could there be?

RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr AL McDonald (Nipissing): My question is for the Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, responsible for rural affairs. Minister, you've spoken in the House recently about your ministry's rural economic development programs that are making a real difference to the folks of northern and rural Ontario through OSTAR RED.

More work needs to be done, but as a colleague of yours, I know you won't rest on your laurels. Could you tell this House how you can further help our northern and rural communities?

Hon Ernie Hardeman (Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I want to thank the honourable member from Nipissing for the question. Ontario's smaller, rural and northern communities sometimes lack the resources needed to drive economic development. We listened to these concerns and responded with a powerful, interactive tool called REDDI.

REDDI stands for rural economic development data and intelligence. This Web site is a cutting-edge, practical, Internet-based tool that gives rural communities access to the province's huge database to help them create local rural development solutions.

REDDI addresses barriers to economic growth that were identified in the Premier's task force on rural

economic renewal chaired by my friend the Honourable Doug Galt, including improved access to relevant information, data and resources, as well as improved capacity for economic planning. We have given Ontario municipalities that and more. Communities can also use the site to understand competitive advantages, identify local strengths and analyze current conditions and trends affecting their local economies.

Mr McDonald: Minister, that is excellent news for our municipal leaders. But do you have to be an expert or a Web master to use the REDDI system effectively?

Hon Mr Hardeman: REDDI was built and tested to ensure easy access by everyday people like you and I and the member. Essentially it's a treasure map with detailed instructions on how to use it, with guides posted every step of the way to help find the critical information that can strengthen rural and northern economies. The program is accompanied by an in-depth tutorial, which takes the user through an example analysis and provides detailed explanations of terminology used.

REDDI is a practical, easy-to-use tool, and another example of the Ernie Eves government's plan to strengthen rural and northern communities. We have a plan and a strategy for rural prosperity. Our plan is working, and we will ensure that we meet our commitments to all the good people who call rural and northern Ontario home.

MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): My question is to the government House leader. The Ontario Power Generation expense was \$5,000 to \$10,000, as I understand it. If the expense had been submitted through the Ministry of Energy, the public could see it through a freedom of information act request. Because the expense came from Ontario Power Generation, there is no way to obtain the expense from Ontario Power Generation, so we don't know whether it was \$5,000 or \$6,000 or \$7,000 or \$10,000. That's a pretty big discrepancy, and we don't know exactly what it is because you've never disclosed that information.

Will you make public the Ontario Power Generation receipts?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): (a) I don't have them, and (b) it's been referred to the Integrity Commissioner. I'm certain the Integrity Commissioner will review it and make his comments.

Mr Bryant: I don't understand how the Integrity Commissioner got them if you didn't have them. You presumably gave them to the Integrity Commissioner. Who gave them to the Integrity Commissioner? No, no, here's my question.

Interjections.

Mr Bryant: Close. Will Ontario Power Generation disclose the expenses?

Interjection.

Mr Bryant: No, he's just too quick to answer a question. Will Ontario Power Generation disclose the ex-

penses? Will you disclose the expenses? If the Integrity Commissioner got them, they had to get them from somebody. Are we supposed to believe that the person who gave them to the Integrity Commissioner has disappeared? I don't care who has them; we just want them made public. Will you, as the government House leader, as the former energy minister, as a member of the executive council, have the OPG expenses disclosed to the public? Period.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I can only say this: I turned it over to the Integrity Commissioner. The Integrity Commissioner is investigating—

Mr Bryant: Then you have them.

Hon Mr Stockwell: No, I turned the matter over to the Integrity Commissioner.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I never had them.

Let me start again. The OPG paid the ground transportation. I never got the bill. I've never seen the bill. I asked—

Mr Bryant: But you gave it to the Integrity Commissioner.

Hon Mr Stockwell: No, I asked the Integrity Commissioner if they would investigate the matter. I'm quite certain that when the Integrity Commissioner—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. You've asked the question. He listened intently for your question. It's only fair that you let him answer as well.

Sorry, Minister.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I asked the Integrity Commissioner to investigate. I presume the Integrity Commissioner will talk to OPG. I presume he will get all the relevant information he needs to make the decision. It's in the hands of the Integrity Commissioner. I have great confidence in Justice Coulter Osborne. I'm sure he's done this before and I'm sure he knows what to do.

SMART GROWTH

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, last week our government took an important step in making the Smart Growth vision a reality. The announcement is over half a billion dollars of funding to support public transit in central Ontario, a major boost, I might say, to reducing my constituents' commuting time, as well as the important issue of gridlock. I know leaders in my community like Ron Hooper, Ron Hope and Bob Malcolmson and others have a great interest in this area.

This kind of announcement is critical to planning our future as we look forward 30 years into the future to three million people in southern Ontario. I'm hoping you can provide more details on this announcement. Could you tell us which parts of the province will benefit and how the action will build on Smart Growth principles?

Hon David Young (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I would start by saying that I share the member's

enthusiasm for this announcement and this big step forward in improving transit across the province. I would be remiss if I didn't take a moment to thank Mayor McCallion for all her hard work as the chair of the central panel of Smart Growth but also, over the last short while, in helping us implement some of the very important recommendations, some of the very important advice that came forward. I should say that my colleague Minister Frank Klees has shown great leadership in this regard as well.

Last week, as the member noted, there was a very significant announcement: \$453 million to improve GO Transit in the GTA-Golden Horseshoe area. It included the modernizing of the track and signal infrastructure in Union Station; GO train service to Barrie; increasing track capacity in the Georgetown-Milton area; new commuter services in Peterborough, Cambridge, Niagara Falls, Guelph and Kitchener-Waterloo; upgrading the Toronto—

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The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

Mr O'Toole: Our government's commitment that you have outlined not only helps the taxpayer, but also helps the economy. You know the principles of sound planning today are what we need, looking into the future, for a strong economy. Our government's commitment is followed up not just by the Smart Growth panels' hard work, but also is demonstrated by the funding that's attached to it. The Smart Growth panels are working in all parts of the province under your guidance and leadership. Obviously the challenges facing other parts of the province are different and the solutions will be different as well. I'm hoping you can provide the House and those listening today with what work is being done by the other Smart Growth panels across Ontario to help all our constituents, regardless of whether they're member-held ridings or in other parts of the province.

Hon Mr Young: I thank the member again for raising this important issue, an issue that will help us plan not just for this year and next year, but for the next three decades in this province. The central panel reported about six weeks ago. I subsequently received the northwestern and northeastern panels' reports. There are five separate Smart Growth panels. A decision was made by the Premier and Minister Hodgson, as he then was, to have different Smart Growth panels in different geographical regions of the province in order to reflect the different challenges that exist. In northern Ontario, for instance, the challenge is keeping young people in their communities, keeping jobs and attracting new jobs, and attracting new residents to those areas. In southern Ontario we have the tremendous benefit of having great growth, both in terms of population and business, but we must ensure the infrastructure is there to accommodate it.

Premier Eves has taken action in relation to the northwestern recommendation. The panel suggested that we need an excellent—

The Speaker: The minister's time is up. New question?

NURSES

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question for the Minister of Health. We have another cluster of possible SARS cases today at Lakeridge Health. Health care workers at the Oshawa and Whitby sites, like health care workers everywhere in Ontario, have been working very hard and putting their lives on the line for SARS. They are heroes.

We understand that 25 registered practical nurses from the Oshawa and Whitby sites of Lakeridge Health have received their pink slips. More than half of these nurses are actually in quarantine this week. They have put their lives at risk and have worked very hard to provide high-quality health. This week, more than half of them were in quarantine as they received their notices. What are you going to do to guarantee that these workers, as a reward for their work, are not going to lose their jobs?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I have no knowledge of what she speaks. I'll look into it.

Ms Martel: If I might provide some additional information, we've got 14 nurses who will be laid off at the Whitby site. All of those are actually in quarantine right now. Eleven nurses are being laid off at the Oshawa site. They are the same nurses who worked in the emergency room where the SARS clinic is. They are the same nurses who were also working in the dialysis unit in Oshawa, the same unit where 12 dialysis patients are now showing signs of SARS. I say again, these RPNs worked very hard at Oshawa and Whitby before this outbreak. They have worked extremely hard to deal with the outbreak. More than half of them are now in quarantine. It seems their reward for their work is to be laid off. Are you going to guarantee in this House today that these nurses are not going to lose their jobs?

Hon Mr Clement: I have no knowledge of the information she seems to have. I'll look into it.

MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): My question is to the Minister of Energy. You're the sole shareholder of Ontario Power Generation. Will you go out there and pick up the phone and call Ontario Power Generation and ask them to disclose the expenses that Minister Stockwell incurred in Europe last summer?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs): In conversations with management and with executives at Ontario Power Generation, I didn't have to ask. They voluntarily agreed that they would be 100% co-operative with the investigation being conducted by the Honourable Justice Coulter Osborne, just as you would expect.

Mr Bryant: That's a no. The Minister of Energy, the sole shareholder of Ontario Power Generation, will not release these expenses to the public. I say to you, this is extraordinary and unusual, that the government would not want to just disclose the expenses. One minute

Minister Stockwell said that he gave the expenses to the Integrity Commissioner; the next minute he said he never had them. Now we're supposed to believe that, in fact, the Minister of Energy has no problem with not disclosing the expenses.

I'm going to ask you again: why would you not disclose the expenses of Minister Stockwell so that we can get to the bottom of the amount of the expenses—\$5,000 to \$10,000—and exactly what they're for? This is starting to sound very suspicious, and you can fix that by disclosing the expenses.

I'll ask you again: in the interest of clearing this matter up, will the minister and sole shareholder for Ontario Power Generation pick up the phone and get those expenses disclosed to the public?

Hon Mr Baird: As I indicated to the member opposite, I had had recent conversations with senior management at Ontario Power Generation. Before I could even raise it with them, they indicated their complete, 100% willingness to co-operate completely with the review being conducted by His Honour Justice Coulter Osborne. If you want to debate this issue—I don't think there is a debate. I think the issue will be settled by His Honour Justice Coulter Osborne. I think he's probably uniquely able to follow a process that's outlined in legislation. He's uniquely capable, in that he was appointed by all members of the Legislature. He's someone of outstanding integrity, and I have a lot of confidence in him that he'll conduct an appropriate review and that Ontario Power Generation and the Ministry of Energy will be completely co-operative in any way possible.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): My question is to the Minister of Energy. With the summer hopefully fast approaching, I know many of my constituents in the great riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale are concerned about the province's electricity supply. Last summer we saw incredible demand for electricity in the record-high extreme temperatures. People are concerned about what will happen if we face similar conditions this summer.

Minister, what can you tell my constituents about Ontario's electricity supply outlook?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs): We're undertaking a comprehensive plan to increase the supply of electricity in the province of Ontario. Since this past summer, we've seen a 500-megawatt plant open in the Sarnia area, which is good news for consumers in the province of Ontario. We've seen a significant new hydro plant opened in northern Ontario. We see Huron Wind, the first commercial wind farm in the province of Ontario. That is all good news.

In the coming weeks, we'll see new supply come on-line from our nuclear reactors at Bruce, where more than 1,500 megawatts of clean energy will be on the grid, followed by 500 megawatts at Pickering. This is an

incredible increase in the amount of electricity available year over year. That will be good news, not just for taxpayers in Ontario, but it will be good news for the price for consumers.

Mr Gill: I thank the minister for that answer. In addition to the immediate concerns, I'm sure that my constituents would be interested to know about the other initiatives the government is undertaking to ensure the province's supply of electricity over the long term.

Minister, can you please tell them what actions our government is taking to ensure a supply of safe, reliable electricity now and in the future?

Hon Mr Baird: I should also note that we have an additional 800 megawatts of new, clean energy that's already on-line that wasn't available last summer with unit six at Bruce B. So Huron-Bruce county and the incredible team in that community are doing yeoman service for the people of the province of Ontario.

We have substantial plans underway. We have under construction today a significant new generation plant in Windsor. We're moving forward with the Portlands facility. Both of those are combined-cycle natural gas, which is very good for the environment when you compare it to conventional fossil fuels. The member for Niagara Falls is pushing quite hard for the third tunnel at Niagara Falls, which we believe would add some significant new generation to the province.

In addition, I had a very good conversation with the Minister of Energy for the province of Manitoba, about Ontario and Manitoba working together on the Conawapa project.

What we need is the federal government, though, to assist us in these regards by making hydro power a recognized form of clean energy. Rather than sending money to Russia to buy credits there, we can make important investments that will have a material impact on the environment in Ontario today.

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MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): My question is to the government House leader. You've had a bit of difficulty, it seems, keeping your story straight. It seems things change from here to there. I want to go back to a question that has been asked before which relates to the question, what was the exact amount that Ontario Power Generation picked up for you for your ground transportation costs while you were on your European tour?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I don't know.

Mr Smitherman: You're a powerful minister in the government over there. In response to why OPG should be out there providing these costs, you said that you're the shareholder. You clearly are a person who has exercised a lot of influence within the government, and we know that you have capacity, that it's well within your

reach, to get a handle on this very important piece of information.

I would ask you again: given the fact that your stories have been seen as somewhat inconsistent—and some people would go further on that point—why don't you do what is well within your reach, which is to seek from your ministerial colleague to get from Ontario Power Generation the exact amount of the ground transportation costs that they picked up for you on your European tour?

Hon Mr Stockwell: My business trip to Europe.

I thought I did the right thing. I don't believe I've done anything wrong and I thought I did the right thing. The minute this question was raised through a story in the paper, I immediately contacted the Integrity Commissioner and I asked the Integrity Commissioner to investigate. I didn't get the bill. I haven't had the bill. I have no idea what the bill was or the amount the bill was for.

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): Don't you see anything wrong with that?

Hon Mr Stockwell: Well, if you see something wrong, I understand that. There are a lot of things that you people think are wrong that I don't. What I am prepared to do, and what I'm very happy to do, is to have the Integrity Commissioner, who has done this on a number of occasions, investigate as to whether or not this was acceptable or the process or policy is acceptable.

I can only say to the member opposite, I know you have great, great respect for Justice Coulter Osborne. So do I. I honestly think, in the best interests of all of us, we should let him do his job.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): My question is for my honourable friend the Associate Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation. Recently the minister announced funding for the Ontario Research and Innovation Optical Network. I was pleased that the University of Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo and Conestoga College were included as funding recipients.

Will the minister take a moment to tell members of this House about this announcement and this leading-edge initiative?

Hon David Turnbull (Associate Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation): I'd like to thank the member for Waterloo-Wellington for this question.

I recently announced a \$5.8-million enhancement to the post-secondary institutions participating in the Ontario Research and Innovation Optical Network, otherwise known as ORION. Our government is investing a total of \$32.3 million for this very important five-year initiative. It will create a province-wide, high-speed fibre optic research network. ORION will link some 43 post-secondary institutions as well as over 50 publicly funded research organizations in this province.

Over five years, the total public-private investment will be \$78 million. This very much builds on our government's initiative to ensure that Ontario remains at the

forefront of global research and scientific discovery in medical research.

Mr Arnott: I want to thank the minister for his answer. I would add that members of this House know that our government has displayed an unprecedented commitment to fostering the development of science and technology in Ontario. By supporting areas such as biotechnology, we are recognizing the value of innovation and cutting-edge technology in the 21st century.

Can the minister expand on some of the exciting initiatives that our government is taking to bolster science and technology here in Ontario?

Hon Mr Turnbull: Our government recognizes that R&D is very much the fuel that drives innovation and economic growth. We've placed a priority on investments which can help to create a culture of innovation in this province. Since 1997, our government has spent \$4.2 billion on science and technology. That is more than either of the two parties across the floor. In June 2002, we announced a \$51-million biotechnology strategy. Its goal was to make Ontario one of the three top biotech centres in the whole of North America. In addition, we've made further commitments, including \$20 million to the Medical and Related Sciences Discovery District, otherwise known as MARS, \$1 billion to the Ontario Innovation Trust, \$1.25 billion to the Ontario Research and Development Challenge Fund and \$100 million to the Ontario Cancer Research Network.

HOME CARE

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): My question is to the Associate Minister of Health. Minister, the cuts that your Manitoulin-Sudbury CCAC is making to home-making services will have a devastating impact on seniors and the disabled.

Nicole Ristimaki of Hanmer is a single mom with two sons. She's completely disabled. Her five hours a week of help with laundry, meal preparation and housekeeping is being cut off. Carmelle Pelletier of Capreol was receiving two hours of help every second week with laundry and cleaning; it's gone. She is booked for more surgery on June 26 and could really use that then. Her income is \$10,000 a year, so she can hardly afford to pay for these services herself.

I ask you, Minister, what are you doing to ensure that Carmelle, Nicole and hundreds of other seniors and the disabled in our communities are going to receive the housekeeping and homemaking services that they need?

Hon Dan Newman (Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Helping Ontarians receive quality home care is a priority for our government and an issue that we take very seriously. I can tell the member opposite that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has been in contact with the Manitoulin-Sudbury Community Care Access Centre and has been assured that the most important services that keep clients in their homes and allow them to maintain their independence are not affected by changes to homemaking services. These

services include personal support such as bathing, help with eating and dressing and also caregiver respite, which includes support for family members living with and caring for clients with a high level of dependency.

As well, I want to tell the member opposite that not all homemaking tasks are changing. Essential meal preparation and laundry services for existing clients will continue. In fact, 150 clients are keeping their homemaking services, and clients who have been receiving homemaking services more than once a week are maintaining those very important services.

Ms Martel: Look, Minister, when your government took over control of CCACs with Bill 130, you took over control of CCACs. You appoint the CCAC boards, you appoint the executive directors, you determine what information is going to be distributed to the public and you hold the purse strings. This problem in Sudbury is your problem, Minister, and you've got a responsibility to fix it. We've got hundreds of seniors and the disabled who need homemaking services and are having them cut off. I related two cases to you today. I related two different cases to you last week, and I have many more. These people cannot afford to pay for these important services themselves.

I ask you, as the minister responsible for CCACs, what are you going to do to ensure that the disabled and seniors in our community get the homemaking services they deserve and need?

Hon Mr Newman: I want to say to the member opposite, what we did when we formed the government was to increase home care funding in this province. In fact, in the Manitoulin-Sudbury Community Care Access Centre area, funding has increased by 22% since 1995. There is 22% in additional dollars going to home care and community care right in the Sudbury-Manitoulin area. In fact, last year alone, funding for the Manitoulin-Sudbury Community Care Access Centre increased by almost \$190,000. We're putting our money where our mouth is with additional dollars to home care and community care in this province.

I want the member opposite to understand that there is indeed an appeal process in place for clients, as per the legislation that was passed in this House. Clients can appeal their individual case to their case manager, to the supervisor and ultimately to the executive director of the Manitoulin-Sudbury Community Care Access Centre.

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MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): I have a question to the government House leader. We have a number of different versions, Minister, as to what happened with the OPG expenses. One version was that you received it and then gave it to the Integrity Commissioner. That's what you said, but apparently that's not the case, you tell me now. Now I take it what you're saying is that you presume, as you put it, that OPG will send the expenses over to the Integrity Commissioner.

You will know, Minister, that under the opinion letter you have sought from the Integrity Commissioner, there's absolutely no basis and no means by which OPG's expenses would be sent to the Integrity Commissioner.

This is not, for the 10th time, an inquiry into a member involving submissions and evidence and investigation—this isn't. He's going to look at your letter, and he's going to send it back to you. He's not going to pick up the phone and call OPG. The only one who can do that is you, the government.

So I'm going to ask you again, why will you not pick up the phone and get Ontario Power Generation to disclose these documents that will never otherwise become public?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I don't think you're right. I think you're wrong. I think your version of the events is wrong. I never said I had received the bill—ever.

Mr Bryant: Yes, you did.

Hon Mr Stockwell: No, I didn't. I said I turned over the investigation. That's what I said.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: It doesn't change. Your version of the story changes—your version. So this is just patently absurd. I have never said anything of the sort.

Secondly, I have done what I thought you were supposed to do in this place: I asked the Integrity Commissioner to investigate.

I talked to the Office of the Integrity Commissioner yesterday after you claimed I was abusing the office. They assured me they didn't feel abused. They assured me they didn't feel put upon. In fact, they assured me this is exactly what they're supposed to do. When you have an issue like this, you give it to the Integrity Commissioner.

So I can only say to the member opposite that the versions didn't change. I spoke to the Integrity Commissioner's office. They don't share your view.

Mr Bryant: This is really convenient. The government of Ontario will not release the Ontario Power Generation expenses. The claim is made that the Integrity Commissioner is going to release the expenses, but we know the Integrity Commissioner doesn't have any statutory power to engage in that investigation.

In the midst of this shell game, now we have Minister Stockwell claiming that Hansard is also torquing the facts. Hansard is not torquing the facts.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Read it.

Mr Bryant: You said it here, and you said it out there. You said that the expenses—

Hon Mr Stockwell: Read it.

Mr Bryant: Just grow yourself a skin, OK? You said your expenses from Ontario Power Generation went off to the Integrity Commissioner. I say to you that what we want is one thing and one thing only—it's really, really simple: disclose the OPG expenses so I can stop asking for them in this House.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Mr Speaker, I am sorry I shouted out that he should read that quote that he claims I said I had the expenses. I asked him to read it; he didn't. Do you know why he didn't read it? Because he doesn't have it.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: You didn't read it. If it was there, why didn't you read it? Because you don't have it.

Secondly, I know what's going on: you do not want to have an impartial third party review this. That's what's going on. You don't want Justice Coulter Osborne to review this. You want a band of jackals in the opposition to review this. You don't want the second-highest jurist in the province of Ontario to review it.

I asked the Integrity Commissioner to review it. OPG has said they will co-operate 100%.

We know what's going on, on this side of the House: you want to try this in public without any reasoned or thoughtful review. Justice Coulter Osborne will do a reasoned and thoughtful review, and that's what you're scared of.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Listening to the Liberals opposite, you'd think there were no issues facing the people of Ontario today, but there are many. One of those issues is about student and youth employment.

Our government believes that in order for students to succeed, they need encouragement, training and resources. Our youth employment initiatives help students build character, confidence and a sense of responsibility. By working at a summer job, students develop the skills necessary to meet life's challenges.

Minister, can you tell me what programs your ministry offers to provide students with the training and skills they need in order to succeed in today's economy?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues): I want to thank my colleague for the question. Obviously, the member from Niagara Falls has always been interested in youth. All you have to do is go down there and see the opportunities young people have in his riding. So I want to thank him for the question.

We need to ensure that all of our young people have many opportunities. The programs are numerous. They're not only numerous in our secondary schools and our elementary schools, but they're numerous in our colleges, our universities, our apprenticeship programs and what we call our community-based programs. Many of these programs are for young people who do not choose to go on to college or university. Our most successful one is Job Connect where, in 2002-03, the ministry helped approximately 92,000 youth find jobs. This is an important message to get out to our constituents: 92,000 youth. Eighty per cent of the young people who go into those programs in the beginning either get a job or go into

more training. It's extremely important that we celebrate this success story.

Mr Speaker, there are other jobs, but I can see—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I was doing it slow enough that she couldn't see me. Supplementary?

Mr Maves: Thank you very much, Minister, for your answer. You're right: things in Niagara are booming, although we've had a bit of a tourism setback so far this year. The member from Erie-Lincoln and I, along with the Minister of Tourism, will be conducting a tourism round table consultation process this Friday to see how we might be able to get the entire community to help kick-start the tourism season in Niagara Falls and make sure our youth have those summer jobs that they've always come to rely on.

As you mentioned, our youth opportunities Ontario strategy will provide students with work experience that will hone their skills and teach them about the job market. Our summer jobs program helps young people 15 and up find work from April to September, offering a range of services including a \$2-per-hour wage support for businesses and community organizations that hire young people for up to 16 weeks.

Can you tell the youth of Ontario what opportunities are available to them and how these programs can help them acquire the skills they need in order to succeed?

Hon Mrs Cunningham: I'll speak a little more quickly. I hope all the members in the House have this brochure about Ontario summer jobs, Ontario Summer Jobs Ahead 2003. It describes all the different types of summer jobs. This one I hope you're all using.

The Ontario summer jobs program had its most successful year in 2002, with more than 60,000 students receiving assistance or finding jobs. Over the past seven years, our Ontario summer jobs program has doubled, from 24,230 jobs to 60,444 jobs. What's important about that? We invest about \$53.1 million over the summer in these young people. Some of them have \$2-per-hour wage supplements. It provides them up to \$3,000. Some of them are starting their own business. They're entrepreneurs. If anyone is interested in the hotline, it's 1-888-JOB-GROW. Refer this to everyone who talks to you in your constituency offices right across the province of Ontario: 1-888-JOB-GROW. You should have this memorized. It's very important. It's a non-partisan issue. Have it memorized: 1-888-JOB-GROW.

VISITORS

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like the House to welcome in the west gallery today Tim and Freda McCallum and Tim's parents, John and Jean McCallum. Welcome to Queen's Park.

PETITIONS

HOME CARE

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas we are outraged by the community care access centre's decision to cut homemaking services to seniors;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) Provide enough resources to the Manitoulin-Sudbury Community Care Access Centre so that they can provide homemaking services; and

"(2) Instruct Associate Minister Dan Newman to accompany MPP Rick Bartolucci to a town hall meeting to hear stories about what will happen when homemaking services are cut off."

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It is indeed my pleasure to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham as follows:

"Whereas the province of Ontario has delayed the second phase of the equity in education tax credits for parents who choose to send their children to independent schools; and

"Whereas prior to the introduction of this tax credit, Ontario parents whose children attended independent schools faced the financial burden of paying taxes to an education system they did not use, plus tuition for the school of their choice; and

"Whereas the equity in education tax credits support parental choice in education and make independent schools more accessible to all Ontario families;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully request that the government of Ontario introduce the second phase of the tax credit forthwith and continue—without delay—the previously announced timetable for the introduction of the tax credit over five years."

I'm pleased to say that this is the very subject of debate in the House tonight, and I endorse this petition.

1500

CITY OF WINDSOR ADMINISTRATION

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly that was gathered by Al Nelman of Windsor, Ontario.

"Whereas the citizens of Windsor, Ontario, have seen the greatest period of sustained growth and resulting prosperity in the city's history;

"Whereas the citizens of Windsor have been presented with a plan which acknowledges a debt of \$225 million by the year 2005;

"Whereas city council has been unable to control the city's administration, leading to unauthorized multi-million dollar contracts;

"Whereas the mayor and a majority of councillors have failed to provide communal services and infrastructure maintenance efficiently and at the lowest possible cost;

"Whereas the mayor and city council have been reckless in the use of land expropriation, leading to the loss of millions of tax dollars;

"Whereas city council has used in-camera meetings to excess, thereby depriving the citizens of Windsor of important public information;

"Whereas city council has arbitrarily reduced public meetings from weekly to biweekly, coupled with a five-minute limit for delegates to make a presentation, drastically reducing public scrutiny and input;

"Whereas city council continues to enter into further unmandated risky commercial undertakings, the pursuit of which continues to divert tax dollars from necessary expenditures;

"Whereas there have been cases of criminal behaviour by members of the administrative staff which have been dealt with under a cloak of secrecy, denying citizens their right to know the extent of the damage they have sustained;

"Whereas taxpayers in the city of Toronto have benefited from a forensic audit, the taxpayers of the city of Windsor believe that an arm's-length investigation is essential;

"Whereas a significant number of the citizens of Windsor no longer trust city council to take care of their interests;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Request the Minister of Municipal Affairs to immediately undertake a forensic audit of the city of Windsor's finances and administrative procedures."

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I'm again presenting a petition from constituents in Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the province of Ontario has delayed the second phase of the equity in education tax credits for parents who choose to send their children to independent schools; and

"Whereas prior to the introduction of this tax credit, Ontario parents whose children attended independent schools faced the financial burden of paying taxes to an education system they did not use, plus tuition for the schools of their choice; and

"Whereas the equity in education tax credits support parental choice in education and make independent schools more accessible to all Ontario families;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully request that the government of Ontario introduce the second

phase of the tax credit forthwith and continue—without delay—the previously announced timetable for the introduction of the tax credit over five years.”

This is covered under Bill 53, An Act respecting the equity in education tax credit, which is being debated on second reading in this House. I present this petition to Lucas, who is a page here in the Legislative Assembly.

INSURANCE RATES

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Progressive Conservative government of Ernie Eves has failed to protect Ontario consumers who are experiencing skyrocketing automotive, home and commercial insurance rates; and

“Whereas the Ontario government has failed to create the regulatory environment that would adequately protect loyal customers in a tough insurance marketplace; and

“Whereas the Harris-Eves government has twice introduced ineffective legislation which has done nothing to stabilize insurance rates in the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas average individual increases in auto insurance rates over the past four years have increased by over 40%; and

“Whereas the people of Ontario are having difficulty obtaining reasonable insurance coverage or are being dropped as customers—even in cases where there has been no change in their risk factors; ...

As a result, “Be it resolved that government of Ontario:

“(1) Introduce effective legislation to ensure those injured in automobile collisions have fair and rapid access to appropriate medical-rehabilitation services;

“(2) Reduce, then stabilize, insurance premiums in Ontario; and

“(3) Improve access to automobile insurance coverage through a more competitive marketplace.”

I affix my signature as I am in complete agreement with the sentiments expressed in this petition.

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I'm surprised that Mr Bradley is not sharing his time for petitions with Mr Brown.

It's my pleasure to present a petition on behalf of this side of the House and on behalf of the constituents of Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the province of Ontario has delayed the second phase of the equity in education tax credits for parents who choose to send their children to independent schools; and

“Whereas prior to the introduction of this tax credit, Ontario parents whose children attended independent schools faced the financial burden of paying taxes to an

education system they did not use, plus tuition for the school of their choice; and

“Whereas the equity in education tax credits support parental choice in education and make independent schools more accessible to Ontario families;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully request that the government of Ontario introduce the second phase of the tax credit forthwith and continue—without delay—the previously announced timetable for the introduction of the tax credit over five years.”

I'm pleased to say that Bill 53 is addressing this issue on behalf of those parents mentioned in this petition.

HYDRO RATES

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I'm pleased to see the Minister of Energy paying much attention to this petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Harris-Eves government has mismanaged the electricity policy of the province of Ontario;

“Whereas Mike Brown, MPP, has been fighting for rural rate assistance;

“Whereas the Ernie Eves government forces Great Lakes Power customers to pay into the fund for rural rate assistance, and rural rate assistance would reduce the distribution bills for customers by hundreds of dollars each year;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, support the efforts of Mike Brown, MPP, to have rural rate assistance extended to the Great Lakes Power service area immediately.”

I'm pleased to sign this petition.

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and I might add it's been approved by the Clerk.

“Whereas the province of Ontario has delayed the second phase of the equity in education tax credits for parents who choose to send their children to independent schools; and

“Whereas prior to the introduction of this tax credit, Ontario parents whose children attended independent schools faced the financial burden of paying taxes to an education system they did not use, plus tuition for the school of their choice; and

“Whereas the equity in education tax credits support parental choice in education and make independent schools more accessible to all Ontario families;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully request that the government of Ontario introduce the second phase of the tax credit forthwith and continue—without delay—the previously announced timetable for the introduction of the tax credit over five years.”

Seeing as how there are a number of constituents in my riding who support the independent school system, I'm very much in agreement with this petition.

1510

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas long-term-care facilities in this province are understaffed, underfunded and ignored by the current government;

"Whereas many residents of St Catharines and of other communities in Ontario are unable to find a family doctor as a result of the growing doctor shortage we have experienced during the tenure of the Harris-Eves government;

"Whereas cancer patients in Ontario requiring radiation treatment face unacceptable delays and are often forced to travel to other jurisdictions to receive medical attention;

"Whereas many prescription drugs which would help patients with a variety of medical conditions such as macular degeneration, multiple sclerosis, arthritis, diabetes and heart failure are inadequately covered by OHIP;

"Whereas long waiting lists for diagnostic tests such as MRIs, CT scans and ultrasounds are jeopardizing the health of many individuals already facing serious illness;

"Whereas the Harris-Eves government has now spent over \$401 million on blatantly partisan government advertising in the form of glossy brochures and television and radio ads;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Conservative government of Ernie Eves to immediately end their abuse of public office and terminate any further expenditure on political advertising and to invest this money into health and long-term care in the province of Ontario."

I affix my signature. I'm in complete agreement.

AUDIOLOGY SERVICES

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): I received a petition from the North York Seniors Centre. It's entitled, "Listen: Our Hearing is Important!"

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas services de-listed by the Eves-Harris government now exceed \$100 million in total; and

"Whereas Ontarians depend on audiologists for the provision of qualified hearing assessments and hearing aid prescriptions; and

"Whereas new Harris-Eves government policy will virtually eliminate access to publicly funded audiology assessments across vast regions of Ontario; and

"Whereas the Harris-Eves government policy is virtually impossible to implement in underserved areas across Ontario; and

"Whereas this policy will lengthen waiting lists for patients and therefore have a detrimental effect on the health of these Ontarians;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand the Mike

Harris-Ernie Eves government move immediately to permanently fund audiologists directly for the provision of audiology services."

I wholeheartedly agree with the citizens at the North York Seniors Centre, and I have affixed my signature to this petition.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Eves government has increased the fees paid for by seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities by 15% or \$7.02 per diem effective August 1, 2002; and

"Whereas this fee increase will cost seniors and our most vulnerable more than \$200 a month; and

"Whereas this increase is 11.1% above the rent increase guidelines for tenants in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the increase in the government's own contribution to raise the level of long-term-care services this year is less than \$2 per resident per day; and

"Whereas according to the government's own funded study, Ontario ranks last amongst comparable jurisdictions in the amount of time provided to a resident for nursing and personal care; and

"Whereas the long-term-care funding partnership has been based on government accepting the responsibility to fund the care and services that residents need; and

"Whereas government needs to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$750 million over the next three years to raise the level of service for Ontario's long-term-care residents to those in Saskatchewan in 1999; and

"Whereas this province has been built by seniors who should be able to live out their lives with dignity, respect and in comfort in this province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Demand that" the Ernie Eves government reduce their "15% fee increase on seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities and increase provincial government support for nursing and personal care to adequate levels."

I affix my signature. I am in complete agreement.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): I have a petition from residents of 1002 Lawrence Avenue East. It is entitled: "Fair Rent Increases Now."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the number of tenants receiving above-guideline rent increases is growing exponentially, and;

"Whereas many of these increases are for increases in utility costs, many of which have gone down since; and

"Whereas tenants should not have to pay for improvements forever, even when the costs have been realized by these rent increases; and

"Whereas the"—misnamed—"Tenant Protection Act does not give a tenant relief due to the costs being realized or a drop in utility costs; and

"Whereas tenants should not be receiving rent increases where there are work orders issued for the building;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to immediately pass MPP David Caplan's Bill 134 entitled the Fair Rent Increases Act at the earliest possible opportunity so that tenants can get relief from above-guideline increases once the bills have been paid."

I truly appreciate these residents sending this petition, and I have affixed my signature to it.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I apologize. I did miss the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford.

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I have a petition to present to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the province of Ontario has delayed the second phase of the equity in education tax credits for parents who choose to send their children to independent schools; and

"Whereas prior to the introduction of this tax credit, Ontario parents whose children attended independent schools faced the financial burden of paying taxes at home to an education system they did not use, plus tuition for the school of their choice; and

"Whereas the equity in education tax credits support parental choice in education and make independent schools more accessible to all Ontario families;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully request that the government of Ontario reintroduce the second phase of the tax credit forthwith and continue—without delay—the previously announced timetable for the introduction of the tax credit over five years."

I affix my signature.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs): I move that pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 43, An Act to provide Ontario home property tax relief for seniors, when Bill 43 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill, without further debate or amendment, at such

time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called on that same day; and

That, when the order for third reading is called, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That, the vote on second and third reading may, pursuant to standing order 28(h), be deferred; and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Mr Baird moves that—

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): Dispense.

The Deputy Speaker: It is dispensed with.

The time will be divided equally among the three caucuses, and I'm looking to my right to start. The Chair recognizes the Minister of Energy and deputy House leader responsible for francophone affairs.

Hon Mr Baird: I would like to ask for unanimous consent if my colleague the Minister of Consumer and Business Services could be the leadoff speaker for the government.

The Deputy Speaker: Agreed? It is agreed.

Interjection.

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): Thank you for your interest, my colleague across the floor; thanks to the Minister of Energy and francophone affairs for the opportunity. The time is going to be split among a number of my colleagues, including Mr Spina, Ms Mushinski and perhaps others as well.

I just want to take a few moments to talk about the importance of this motion because of the importance of this bill, which will bring tax relief to seniors across the province. A particular concern of mine is the seniors who reside in Erie-Lincoln. These individuals from Canada's greatest generation have helped to build the province of Ontario, helped to build Niagara. Those seniors, at the end of the month, are sitting down with their budgets, on fixed incomes, trying to make sure they can make ends meet, that they can pay their bills. They are trying to find a way to stay independent as long as possible in their own homes, which they have been paying into. I think it is only fair, just and reasonable, and I think it's good public policy, that we should give them some relief on their taxes.

Bill 43 speaks to that specifically. It will relieve the education portion of property taxes that seniors are paying on their homes, and I believe tenants who are seniors as well. So when you get your bill, you have the regional tax, you have the municipal tax, and the education portion of the property tax would be rebated. Again, I think some tax relief for hard-working seniors is fair, whether they're in Fort Erie or Lincoln, in West Lincoln, Dunnville or Port Colborne.

1520

I think there's a big difference, too, between the government's approach to this issue and the opposition's.

I know that they voted against this bill in the past. We'll see how they vote on future readings and this motion, but I believe that they will vote against this bill. I think the opponents in the Liberal Party have been rather clear that they oppose tax cuts. They don't believe in tax cuts. In fact, they must feel that taxes are fine the way they are. I believe that taxes should be reduced. I believe that taxes to seniors should be reduced.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): They think they should be higher.

Hon Mr Hudak: The member from Niagara Falls says the opposition thinks they should be higher, which is in fact true. You look at the planks of both the Liberal and the NDP. They will increase taxes, it has been rather clear. I think by opposing this, they will be increasing taxes on seniors in the province of Ontario.

I know the local Liberal candidate, the mayor of Port Colborne in the riding of Erie-Lincoln, has a very clear record. In fact, as mayor he has increased the residential tax rate, according to Ministry of Finance records, by 19% over the past three years, a 19% increase in taxes on seniors who are living in Porto Village, seniors who are living in the city of Port Colborne—a substantial bite out of their incomes, particularly when they're living on a fixed income.

We have different views. Dalton McGuinty and Vance Badawey believe in higher taxes for seniors, for individuals, for working families, for small businesses. We believe in lower taxes. I support fundamentally this piece of legislation that will lower the education portion of the property taxes for seniors in the province of Ontario. I believe it stands as a solid record, in comparison with my opponent, who has increased the taxes on seniors by about 19%. It stands in good contrast, stark contrast to the Liberal Party platform, which would be increasing taxes pretty much across the board, whether you're a senior, a small business or a middle-class family.

I strongly support this motion. I want to see this bill brought into this House for its third and final reading. I'd like to see this passed into law. I'd like to see some property tax relief for the hard-working seniors who helped to build the province of Ontario and the communities in the Niagara Peninsula and Dunnville.

Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston): Once again, we find ourselves with a government time allocation motion. I would have thought that, given that this bill—Bill 43—was the centrepiece of the government's platform, the Conservative Party's platform, going into the next election, they might have wanted to debate this ad infinitum, or at least for the normal time that it would take to put a bill through this House. But here we are yet again, the government calling for a time allocation motion to cut off debate. That has happened so often around here, it's almost the norm. Whenever a bill goes through this House, it's time-allocated.

Let's talk about the bill, because I think it's important to recognize that this is another regressive tax measure by this government. Very regressive, I say, because Bill 43 will make it possible for the very wealthiest individuals

in this province to receive enormous tax benefit from this bill. People who are multi-millionaires—Ken Thomson, Hal Jackman, to name a few—will be receiving upwards of \$1,500 a month in terms of property tax credit as a result of Bill 43, whereas the average middle-income senior might only receive \$500 or \$600 as a result of this tax measure.

That is why we are opposed to this motion. That is why we're virtually opposed to every tax cut this government has made. Their tax cuts are regressive. They turn the very idea of progressive government upside down. They make it very difficult for people who are living on modest means, of modest incomes, to get by. The seniors in my community are having a very, very difficult time just making ends meet. They remind me of the fact that insurance costs have gone up dramatically in this province—enormous increases, double-digit increases for insurance. If they drive an automobile, they've seen their auto insurance go up an average of 19%, and in many cases much more than that. That is hurting seniors. They've seen their hydro bills go up, they've seen just about every other bill go up, and they're continuing to live on the same income. They're having to get by.

I think it's inappropriate for this government, actually in my opinion it's almost immoral, to give thousands of dollars in a property tax credit to Mr Ken Thomson, who's a multi-millionaire. Why does Frank Stronach need a property tax rebate? I would think that some of these people—I think there are quite a number of them. We name them because they're the most noteworthy and probably the wealthiest individuals of the province, but there are other multi-millionaires who would say, "Why do I need a tax credit? I really don't need this." Would it not be better that we should use this money to help those seniors who are desperate right now, who have no home care? Would it not be more appropriate to allocate those monies for our health care system that is in need of additional resources, that is under extreme stress these days? Would it not be better to help others who are in need?

I think most Ontarians are indeed very progressive, are more concerned about what is happening to our public institutions and our systems that are there to help all Ontarians. They're very concerned about that. I would like to remind members that—and I use the word "progressive" for very good reason—it used to be in Ontario that the Conservative Party of Ontario had ruled this jurisdiction for the better part of 43 years consecutively, post-World War II, until the Peterson government came along in 1985 and defeated then-Premier Miller.

At that time, in 1980, under Bill Davis, they introduced the Ontario Pensioners Property Tax Assistance Act. The assistance act was a measure designed to assist seniors with property tax rebates; in fact, it was a grant. But guess what? This act capped the amount at \$500. It was far and away fairer to cap the amount than what you're proposing to do in Bill 43, where there is no cap. There is no test with regard to income. In fact, the more you've paid, the more you get back. The whole thing

about property tax is that it's based on wealth. It's based on the value of that property. It's landed wealth; in history it goes back.

I believe it's important to recognize that the concept now is turned on its ear. The progressive nature of our tax system has been turned upside down by this government, and therefore there is no progressiveness in any measure this government has brought forward. This is a very hurtful tax credit. It hurts seniors. It doesn't, as I say, help out seniors with respect to home care. In my riding, the North York CCAC is struggling to make ends meet. They were facing a \$10-million shortfall. When I raised this issue in the House, the CCACs across Toronto were facing enormous pressure. They had to turn their backs on many seniors who needed home care to continue to live in their homes.

It would be far more appropriate to dedicate the amounts they're going to grant by way of a tax credit to the wealthiest seniors like Ken Thomson, Frank Stronach and Hal Jackman, to direct those funds, to home care programs in each of our ridings for people who actually need that benefit, who need the help.

1530

Wouldn't it be more appropriate to help those seniors stay in the community? They're having a heck of a time trying to live independently. This measure does not assist them to do that, because it's not directed at home care and it's not going to help people in nursing homes. This government imposed a 15% fee hike on seniors who live in nursing homes. This does nothing to assist them.

Our party is proposing to improve home care. We want to help seniors maintain their independence in the community. That is very critical. I say to the government, if their measure had been more progressive, capping the amount, then I think some people on this side of the House might support the measure. We might stand up and say, "Well, if we're going to help seniors and it's directed to those who need it, then that might be a worthwhile measure and we would give it some consideration."

That is not the case with this measure. It is regressive; it is hurtful; it is using resources in a very unwise fashion. It is yet again another example of this government not understanding that seniors who live on fixed incomes, who are of modest means, cannot get by. The frail elderly need the additional home care. There were 70-year-olds in my riding who were having to take care of their parents who were in their 90s because they had been cut off from home care or did not have access to it. That's the kind of Ontario that we live in as a result of this government's policies. That's shameful, absolutely shameful. To give \$5,000 and \$10,000 back to multi-millionaires is the most regressive thing this government has ever done.

Thank you, Speaker. I'll be sharing my time with my colleagues.

The Deputy Speaker: I just wanted to take a moment to welcome the grade 8 students of St Aloysius School in Stratford in the visitors' gallery, along with their prin-

cipal Herman Koert and Karen Abernot, and they have other chaperones and helpers with them. Welcome to Toronto and the Legislature.

Further debate?

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I want to indicate at the outset that I will be sharing this time with my colleague from Sault Ste Marie. This is a time allocation motion that we're dealing with today, so it has to be Wednesday. Every Wednesday that the two of us are in here, Mr Martin and myself, we are dealing with a time allocation motion. The government doesn't disappoint us again today, as we deal with yet another initiative that truly shifts money from the poor to the rich in just an unbelievable fashion.

I want to say at the outset that our party will not be supporting Bill 43. We voted against it once; we'll vote against this time allocation motion. We'll vote against this bill because what this government is interested in doing is moving money that should go to low-income seniors to those like their friends: wealthy seniors who have absolutely no need of a break at all when paying property taxes on their \$5-million estates.

Our argument would also be that the \$450 million the government proposes to put out through this initiative, along with the \$15 million that it will cost just to administrate this scheme, frankly is money that would be much better spent dealing with, for example, the disabled seniors in Sudbury-Manitoulin, who will lose all of their homemaking services courtesy of this government beginning July 23; or with seniors in long-term-care facilities, who last year took a hit of a \$3.05-a-day increase, every day, day in and day out, on their cost of accommodation in long-term care facilities, which this government hasn't compensated them for; and with any number of other initiatives for seniors that, frankly, we should be dealing with instead of giving money to wealthy seniors to pay for their multi-million dollar estates here in Ontario and other places in the province.

Let me begin by saying that I listened to the debate two nights ago and heard any number of government members say, and try to have people who were watching believe, that there's absolutely nothing in place in terms of a credit to assist seniors who are struggling with their property taxes, those seniors who want to stay in their own homes but are finding it very difficult because of high property taxes. If you had listened to the government members two nights ago, they would have had you believe that there is nothing in place, which of course is completely false, just not true and dishonest.

Secondly, it was interesting to hear some of the Conservative members cry about property taxes, as if their government had nothing to do with the high burden of property taxes that people in municipalities are facing. I would remind those people who are watching that it was this government that over 1996 and 1997 down-loaded 100% of public health costs, 20% of the entire child care budget, 20% of the family resource program budget, 100% of the cost of public transit, 100% of the property costs of property assessment services and 100%

of ambulance services on to municipalities, and cut all funding for municipal roads. This was the government that downloaded all of those things on to municipalities.

The government tries to pretend that because they took back some money on education, in fact the exchange was revenue-neutral. I want to quote from Mayor Jim Gordon, who is a Conservative member. He may still be a card-carrying Conservative member. I don't know that for sure, so I shouldn't say that. Mayor Jim Gordon, of the city of Greater Sudbury, used to be a Conservative MPP and cabinet minister. Mr Gordon and company from the municipality appeared before Madam Ecker's travelling road show when she was doing pre-budget consultation earlier this spring.

This is what Mayor Jim Gordon, Conservative, had to say about how neutral the government's exchange really was:

"The continuing revenue imbalance with regard to the local services realignment ... of 1998" presents major challenges.

"The challenge for 2003 will be to meet the increasing burden of those services transferred to the municipalities in 1998." He gives the following examples. Let me read them into the record:

Example 1: "The continuing increase in costs with regard to Ontario Works and children's services whereby the province has imposed a ceiling on its subsidy that it will pay for administration," a ceiling "that does not recognize salary, benefits, rent increases ... etc and are therefore passed on to" this "municipality at 100% dollars. An estimate for Ontario Works indicates that this" cost "alone is worth \$440,000 in 2003."

Example 2: "The insufficient funding for social housing:

"As you will recall, in 1998 the city became responsible for social housing and assumed approximately 5,500 units. The revenue neutrality of this transfer was questioned at that time and is still questioned today. The 2003 social housing budget, net of CRF changes, has increased by \$900,000. This is due to inflationary increases, capital requirements of the local housing corporation, and increased non-profit housing costs. In spite of the \$900,000 increase, there continues to be a significant gap in capital funding for social housing in general," courtesy of this government.

Example 3 of the lack of neutrality is the following:

"Again dealing with those services that were transferred to the municipality, the provincial offences revenue that was used as an offset in the CRF (community investment fund) calculation was never realized, and as the CRF does not take into consideration lost revenue in provincial" expenses, "this has resulted in a further cost to the city of an additional \$700,000" for the year 2003 alone.

Example 4: "Again dealing with the CRF, the province has imposed an unrealistic salary cap for those involved in land ambulance services; namely 2%. Salary increases today in both the private and public sectors are over 3%, yet the province refuses to move on this cap.

This again will add approximately \$700,000 to the municipal budget."

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The above are but a few examples of where the local services realignment is not and was not revenue-neutral, and continues to put financial burdens on municipalities. In addition to these specific examples, the community reinvestment fund is not indexed to inflation and therefore puts an additional burden on to municipalities like my own.

It must be remembered that at the time of the social services realignment in 1998, municipalities were expected to find savings to make up for lost provincial grants. The total lost grants at that time were just over \$7 million for the eight municipalities which are now the city of Greater Sudbury. Over the last six years, Sudbury has lost over \$42 million in provincial grants.

There you have it. This was a presentation that was done by Mayor Jim Gordon and the city to Madam Ecker at the pre-budget consultations earlier this spring in Sudbury. There is no doubt that the exercise of downloading services and hundreds of millions of dollars of costs associated with those services, while the province picked up education costs, was not revenue-neutral. There you have it from a former MPP of the Conservative Party, a former cabinet minister of the Conservative Party, who is now the mayor of the city of Sudbury.

It was not then, and is not now, revenue-neutral. The reason so many municipalities like my own are experiencing increases in property taxes is because this exchange was not revenue-neutral and because the government did not download the money needed to provide those services at the time when those services were dumped on to municipalities.

The government members who were so interested in talking about how terrible it was that property taxes are increasing and how they have to do something about it have a lot to answer for. It is this government and the policy of downloading these services that are driving up property taxes in municipality after municipality across this province, including my own.

I go back to one of the points that was raised that evening by government members: that somehow there was nothing in place to protect seniors from high property taxes—high property taxes directly driven by this government. In fact, there is a property tax credit that is in place for seniors. It has been providing property tax relief for low-income seniors for some time now. Those are surely the seniors who we are trying to protect and who we want to assist, in order that they remain in their own homes. In fact, there is relief already in place, already existing, to ensure that low-income seniors can stay in their homes.

The difference between what is in place now to protect vulnerable seniors who want to remain in their homes and what the government wants to do, is the government wants to take the lid off the cap that is currently in place for you to qualify. The government will now provide your taxpayer dollars, and mine, to any senior in this

province, regardless of their income, to pay for their property taxes.

Why should taxpayers of this province be paying property taxes for wealthy seniors in Ontario? Wealthy seniors, for example, like Ted Rogers and his wife Loretta—Ted Rogers, who is the cable television magnate—are going to see the tax bill on their \$5.5-million Toronto home reduced by more than \$23,000 annually as a result of this measure. Why do Ted Rogers and his wife need that kind of money? They don't. Media tycoon Ken Thomson and Barrick Gold founder and chairman Peter Munk, with homes in Toronto assessed at about \$5.3 millions respectively, will each pay about \$22,500 less in property taxes, courtesy of the measure that the government brings to us today. Good for them. They really need it, don't they? Annual property taxes on the \$3.6-million home of Toronto financier and former Lieutenant Governor Hal Jackman will decline by nearly \$15,000 this year courtesy of this government, while singer Gordon Lightfoot—whose music I appreciate very much—will save nearly \$17,000 this year on his \$4-million Toronto home when he turns 65 later this year.

These are hardly Ontario seniors who are vulnerable. They are hardly Ontario seniors who need to take other people's tax money in order to reduce their property taxes. If they want to build and own \$4-million estates, that's their business. They should pay the property taxes for their estates. We should not be using taxpayers' dollars to pay property taxes of these wealthy seniors or others. We have a property tax credit in place to protect low-income seniors to ensure that taxpayers' dollars go to ensuring those low-income seniors get a break on their property taxes and can stay in their own homes. It is appalling that we are here today dealing with a tax measure that's going to pay property taxes for the likes of these individuals and other wealthy Ontarians who don't, for a moment, need help paying their property taxes.

I listened to the government try and talk about this benefit for seniors. I think it's worth reading into the record some of the comments from the very seniors' organizations that the government purports that they are going to help through this measure. First of all, let me deal with Judy Cutler, communications director for Canada's Association for the Fifty-Plus, a seniors' lobby group with more than 400,000 members. She said, "This will do nothing to really help seniors who don't own expensive homes. The budget was an insult to the intelligence and well-being of seniors. Throwing a few bucks back isn't going to be enough to provide what people really need: home care and affordable rental housing."

Let's look at what Mae Harman had to say in the *Toronto Star* of April 5. She is 83 years old, a co-founder of the Ontario Coalition of Seniors' Organizations.

"Pensioner Mae Harman admits it's a struggle to pay ever-increasing property taxes on her modest north Toronto bungalow.

"But she wants no part of last week's provincial budget plan to give her a rebate on the education portion of her local tax bill.

"As a senior I just think it's deplorable."

"I'd certainly like to get some extra money, but not at the expense of public education. Seniors value education and believe it's important to support it.' ...

"The sop to seniors of relief from education taxes, which will most benefit those with the most expensive properties, is an insult to grandparents and the majority of seniors. It's totally ridiculous," says Harmon, whose coalition includes more than 150 groups representing more than 500,000 seniors across the province."

Here's a third example, this time from Ethel Meade, who is the co-chairwoman of the Ontario Coalition of Seniors' Organizations in Ontario. She said "the government is 'very uneasy about getting elected again and they think they can appeal to seniors.'

"While the education property tax break will be attractive to people who have expensive properties, Ms Meade said, 'I find it offensive because to even suggest that seniors have no concern about education is off the wall.

"It's a public good that we want to contribute to,' she said, noting that the \$450 million in forgone tax revenue could be used to improve services in long-term-care facilities."

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That's from some of the seniors the government purports to represent with this initiative. They want nothing to do with it.

I think what's also interesting about this particular initiative is that even the right-wing friends of the government want nothing to do with this initiative, are against it. It's worth reading some of their comments into the record today as well.

This comes from John Williamson, Ontario director of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, who "condemned the government's decision to enrich the tax break and limit it only to seniors rather than giving all Ontario homeowners the 10% reduction in residential ... property taxes they were promised.

"It's favouring one group of taxpayers over another," he charges, noting that the approach implies that people who do not have children in school should not have to pay education taxes.

"A lot of people (who aren't seniors) have to pay the education portion of property taxes, but don't have kids in school so why are they paying? If you want to take it to its logical conclusion, younger people don't use the health care system as much. Should they get a tax break for that? It's not fair and it's not right to base tax policy on age."

That was Mr John Williamson, the Ontario director of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation.

He also said in a separate article of April 5 in the *Toronto Star*:

"This is a broken promise on the eve of an election leaving a lot of people high and dry and pandering to an

important demographic group for the Conservative Party,' he says. 'It's not good tax policy and it's very poor public policy.'"

I have two more quotes. I don't know if these people are particular friends of this government, but I can say that clearly they're not friends of ours. They represent the right wing.

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: Sorry to interrupt Ms Martel, but I'd like to introduce, in the east gallery, from Britt school in Parry Sound district, principal Gregg Holmes, Barbara Wahleber, and the grades 7 and 8 classes.

The Deputy Speaker: And of course the St Aloysius school in the west gallery.

Ms Martel: Speaker, I saw how you got that in when you were up.

Let me go back to these two folks. As I said, I don't know if they're personal friends of people in the Conservative Party, but they certainly reflect right-wing ideologies and had this to say about the government's measure:

"Finn Poschman of the right-wing C.D. Howe Institute says it's legitimate for the government to fear that a broad-based property tax cut would simply create room for municipalities to take it back. 'But I hardly think that it could outweigh the longer-term philosophical dubiousness of the overall approach,' he says.

"As a matter of tax policy it should raise alarms,' Poschman says. 'One of the very few commonly agreed results in economics and public finance is that broad support of public education is a good idea.'

"Bankers were also baffled by the move.

"I scratched my head and asked myself what was the logic behind this and I must confess that I came up empty,' says Don Drummond, chief economist for TD Financial Group.

"Typically you don't provide tax relief that is completely unrelated to income. It's a bit strange to base (tax relief) on an age category.'

"Drummond says he can see why a government might want to give property tax relief to seniors, but he doesn't understand why the Tories linked it to education when everyone, especially seniors, benefits from a well-educated population.

"What I find really perverse is that this is not going to help the low-income senior but is going to go mostly to higher-income people who have large values on their property,' he adds. 'That makes the measure even more bizarre.'"

Those are typically friends of the government who have this to say about the measure that's before us. Let me just repeat that: "What I find really perverse is that this is not going to help the low-income senior but is going to go mostly to higher-income people who have large values on their property," he adds. 'That makes the measure even more bizarre.'"

He's right, isn't he? Bizarre, unacceptable, ridiculous, whatever you want to use, the fact remains that we

should not be using taxpayers' money to subsidize the property taxes of the well-off and rich and famous seniors who live in this city and others in this province, like the ones I have already mentioned.

There is an existing tax credit for low-income seniors. It should continue to be maintained, because then we guarantee that those low-income seniors, who need help the most with their property taxes to stay in their own homes, actually get the money they need to stay in their own homes. We should not be using \$450 million of taxpayer money to pay property taxes for the rich and famous. That's absolutely wrong.

It's also wrong to somehow suggest that seniors don't want to or should not be paying for education. Education is an enormous public good. We all benefit from a first-class education system, although it's very clear that our education system has been under attack in the last eight years and that we do need to put more money into it, as Mr Rozanski has already said.

But you see, every individual in Ontario benefits from a high-quality education system, seniors alike. I know the seniors who have talked to me about this initiative in my riding make it very clear that when they go to the hospital they benefit from the services of well-educated nurses, they benefit from the services of well-educated doctors. They benefit from the services in our community of engineers who are doing roadwork and bridgework. They benefit, and so do I and so do you, Speaker, every time well-educated people in this province carry out the services that they do every day. So it is just nuts to imply that somehow seniors don't understand the value of their paying for education, because they do; they recognize how much they benefit.

If the government wanted to do something with the \$450 million that's going to go out under this scheme, the majority of that money to go to the well-off and rich and famous who don't need help with their property taxes, the government could do a number of things. The government, for example, could ensure that the community care access centre in my own riding, which is now cutting seniors and the disabled off from their homemaking services, actually had the money to provide those services.

This afternoon and last Thursday I raised a number of examples of seniors and the disabled who are getting their housekeeping help cut; the help they were getting for meal preparation, for cleaning etc all being cut. There are hundreds of seniors and the disabled in my community who will lose that service as of June 23.

It's a lot more effective cost-wise to ensure that seniors can remain in their own homes than it is to force them into long-term-care facilities where it costs two, three and four times the amount of money we would ever spend on giving seniors the homemaking services they need to stay in their own homes in dignity.

If the government wanted to truly do something for seniors, the government would be guaranteeing that the seniors who are supposed to lose their homemaking services in Sudbury-Manitoulin beginning June 23 would

actually have those maintained. The government, I see, is not prepared to do that, given the answer the minister gave to us today.

If the government wanted to do something for seniors, the government would compensate seniors for the \$3.02 increase per day, every day, day in and day out, that they imposed on seniors in long-term-care facilities last summer. That \$3.02-a-day increase in accommodation for seniors represented an increase in their accommodation fees of about 6.65%, well above the rental guidelines in the private market. They wouldn't have been able to get away with that in the rental housing market, because that increase was above the guideline.

So if the government really wanted to do something for seniors, vulnerable seniors, who I heard the government talk so much about two nights ago, then the government would be in here announcing that they were going to compensate seniors for the gouging this government undertook with respect to those seniors as a result of that rate hike. It's clear the government is only going to increase the fees this year in line with what those same seniors would get as a rate of inflation increase, but the government has said nothing about last year, the fee hike of \$3.02 every day that was imposed last September and that's still in effect today, a 6.65% increase in fees. If the government wanted to do something like that with the \$450 million, I'd be supportive.

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There are any number of things the government could do with respect to seniors if they were really interested. They could bring in rent control again and stop seniors from being evicted from their rental units, because that's happening as well. They could actually cancel hydro privatization and deregulation, because the fact of the matter is that's been a fiasco, and didn't that drive up people's bills until the government was forced to bring in a cap last November.

It will be interesting to see if the government's going to do the same as the government in Alberta, which just before the election brought in rate caps on hydro, gave rebate cheques, and then six months after the election took off the rate caps, cancelled the rebate cheques, and people's hydro bills went right through the roof again. That could easily happen here.

There are a number of things the government could do. It was interesting because in the last four weeks the government got a presentation from the United Seniors of Ontario that had a list of about 26 items that they were lobbying the government about, at least 26 items the government could undertake to really help seniors if they wanted to. I will call on the government to do even one of those 26, and those vulnerable seniors might be further ahead.

But to deal with the initiative we are dealing with today, the scheme we are dealing with today, to somehow say this helps vulnerable seniors is just completely false. All it does is ensure that wealthy, well-to-do seniors who have multimillion-dollar homes in this city and others in

this province are going to get taxpayers' money they don't need and shouldn't get in the first place.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): It's always interesting to follow the socialist party in some policy issues. It's amazing how easily they strayed from their fundamental philosophy from when they were in power to becoming the opposition. When they were in power, they imposed things like breaking every collective agreement in the province, called the Social Contract Act—no public hearings, order in council, and all the rest of that stuff. Yet here they cry for democracy.

I'm pleased to speak to our government's commitment to supporting seniors in this bill, the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act. I think there's no better time to let Ontario's 1.5 million seniors know that we appreciate their lifetime of hard work than in this month of June, Seniors' Month. I think it's appropriate that we not only introduce this bill, but that we want to make sure it gets passed this month as well. This is one of the many ways in which this government is recognizing our Ontario seniors' contributions to this province.

This tax relief for seniors act proposes to complete the government's commitment to reduce residential education property taxes through tax relief provided to our seniors across this province. Under this bill, as you know, seniors would be eligible for a refund of the residential education portion of the property tax they currently pay on their principal residence.

This program has been designed to be simple and to provide education property tax relief to all eligible seniors. I want to repeat that word. It says "eligible" seniors. The reality is, as opposed to what the opposition claims, I don't know how many wealthy people will actually be eligible for this. We don't know yet. In fact, if all of them were, it would likely be less than a handful, compared to the 1.5 million seniors in this province who are on fixed incomes. They would be the beneficiaries of this break.

The government proposes to provide this new relief in addition to the existing Ontario property and sales tax credits that are available under the income tax system. It is over and above these particular tax breaks that this one will take place.

Pending approval from this Legislature, the delivery of the payments under this new program will begin in December 2003. They will be able to file these claims for this year's tax year.

Together with the personal income tax age credit, additional support for seniors through the Ontario property and sales tax credit and the benefits from Ontario's personal income tax cuts, this new property tax relief initiative would mean \$2.5 billion in tax savings per year for seniors here in Ontario. That's \$2.5 billion in savings for the 1.5 million seniors we have in this province.

In addition to this tax relief, Ontario is meeting the challenges of not only an aging society, with programs and services that protect the health and well-being of our seniors, but also of all taxpayers. This tax relief is one of many already in place that are being implemented by this

government—not just an empty promise; in fact to be delivered before an election campaign.

Combined with this budget's proposals, individuals and businesses would benefit from \$16 billion in tax relief in 2003-04. Over the past eight years, we have announced 225 tax cuts, including 17 alone in this year's budget.

The rationale is very simple. Tax cuts work. The opposition refuses to believe it, but the facts are there. They support our growing economy, our economic prosperity, and they create jobs. In the G8 of the entire world this jurisdiction led every other jurisdiction. For all the claims the opposition makes that we just rode on the coattails of the United States, the reality is, folks, that we lead the G8, and that includes the United States. The Ontario economy outperformed the United States of America. Chew on that one, opposition members.

To that end, we are proposing a number of amendments to the Income Tax Act that would contribute to continued economic growth in this province. We propose to increase the threshold at which Ontario taxpayers are required to pay the provincial surtax. In other jurisdictions, it is way higher than this. In Ontario, effective January 2004, we will complete our commitment to the 20% reduction in personal income tax and will provide about \$900 million in additional tax relief. It's unbelievable that the surtax rate here in Ontario is \$75,000, that we're raising it to. Everybody thinks that's high income. In the grander scale of things, folks, that's a median income for two-income families, and most families are two-income families.

That's not to say that people at \$35,000 and \$40,000 don't deserve a break; in fact they do. With the previous tax breaks we've introduced since 1995, people earning \$30,000 or less in this province pay zero provincial income tax. Now that our original income tax breaks have been introduced, as well as the others, anyone less than \$30,000 pays zero—no provincial income tax. It's all federal, folks. Whatever income tax you pay, if you're a \$30,000-income earner, it's the federal Liberal government that you are supporting and that should be giving you a tax break as well, just like the province of Ontario.

We are also proposing an amendment that would provide an increase in the basic amount of the Ontario tax reduction for taxpayers with low and moderate incomes from \$181 to \$197. This again becomes effective January 1, 2004, and the amount would be adjusted for inflation. This brings the total—are you ready for this, Speaker?—to 700,000 people who no longer pay Ontario income tax as a result of this government's personal income tax reductions since 1995; 700,000 people in this province, and they are the lowest-income, the most vulnerable, the working poor. So anybody who claims that our tax deductions were strictly for the rich totally ignores these 700,000 people in this province who no longer pay Ontario income tax.

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If they're still paying tax, I say again, my friend from Ottawa, who gets it? The federal Liberals collect. That's

where your taxes are going if you're one of these 700,000 people who benefited from our provincial tax breaks.

In addition, Ontario's personal income tax system already provides significant recognition for these differences through a variety of tax credits. Ontario's age credit, for example, will deliver more than \$200 million in tax savings this year. To whom? To low- and moderate-income seniors. Ontario property and sales tax credits provide enriched benefits for seniors that deliver an additional \$300 million a year in income-tax-based support to seniors and their families. As a group, seniors are also saving \$1.6 billion this year as a result of Ontario's tax cuts to date.

Anybody who claims this government is not thinking of the seniors is out of their mind, because this government is very conscious of seniors. I think specifically of my friend Joan Pearce in Brampton, who is president of the Brampton Senior Citizens Council. She heads a council that represents over a dozen community seniors' groups, from the Knightsbridge seniors' homes in our area, to the Filipino representatives of the East Indian community, representatives of the West Indian community, and others in the Brampton area. I'm very proud of the fact that Joan Pearce, from starting out as a very strong critic of this government, has really come around to see what in fact we are trying to do. I'm very pleased to be able to communicate on a regular basis with the seniors' council and communicate to them what in fact this government has done and will continue to do for the seniors of Brampton and the rest of our province.

Increased tax support is also proposed to help those who care for infirm spouses or common-law partners. These are adults who help their infirm parents, or adults who help infirm grandparents of modest income stay in their own homes. It's an incentive to help them stay within the dignity of their home environment and not have to be institutionalized.

Together with these proposed increased tax credits for people with disabilities, this additional tax support would provide annual benefits of \$50 million to about 165,000 family caregivers and people with disabilities, providing average savings of about \$300 each. If you know anything about people who are caregivers, that's enough to buy respite care if they don't have it, or to buy equipment or other supplies that that infirm family member requires. That's a big, big help to these people and these families.

These funds could be used to help improve nursing services. They could buy personal care, meals and programs for seniors that are living in long-term-care facilities.

I want to emphasize, as Finance Minister Ecker has done before me, that this new measure, the Ontario home property tax relief for seniors, would not—I repeat, would not—affect the education funding formula. In fact, it has been demonstrated each and every year that the entire funding budget for the school boards has increased. We addressed all of the issues that Rozanski brought forward. He wanted \$1.8 billion put into the system; that commitment is there as of this year's budget. Even while

continuing to cut the education property tax in 2003-04, the government has committed more than \$15.3 billion in funding to further strengthen our education system. Spending on public education will increase to—how much? I say to the member opposite—\$16.2 billion for the 2005-06 school year, more than any education spending under any previous provincial government in this province.

I'm happy to point out to members of this House that honouring seniors is more than just the right thing to do, it makes good economic sense. On May 29 this year, Premier Eves announced the introduction of legislation to end mandatory retirement in this province. Let me quote the Premier's own words on the occasion of this historic initiative.

"Ontario's seniors spent their lives working hard, raising families and building the strong province we enjoy today. We owe it to them to ensure they enjoy a healthy and fulfilling lifestyle. That is why our government is acting on several fronts to improve the quality of life for all seniors across Ontario."

The legislation to end mandatory retirement would promote fairness. It promotes personal choice, and it respects the dignity of older people. Our government listened to the Ontario Human Rights Commission, which made this recommendation. We're acting upon this recommendation and recognize that the time has come to strengthen the Ontario Human Rights Code to better protect our elder workers. Ontario needs to retain skilled workers to strengthen our economy, to keep the strength that's also in the economy. The number of skilled workers does not always keep pace with growth sectors. Capable elderly workers can help meet those demands by staying active in the labour market. Projections point to a doubling of Ontario's over-65 population by 2026. I'll be long gone by that time—

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): No.

Mr Spina: Well, yes, 2026 is 23 years away. I don't plan to live to be whatever age that will be, one hundred and something.

Interjection: You're not that old.

Mr Bradley: I thought you were 38.

Mr Spina: Yeah, I wish. All right, I'll confess, I'll be 80, or somewhere in that neighbourhood.

Amending the Ontario Human Rights Code so that it does not allow age-based retirement policies will allow older workers to choose when they want to retire based on their own lifestyle, circumstances and priorities.

It doesn't change collective agreements. If a collective agreement is in place that says you can and will retire or have optional retirement windows, as we've seen in various places—age 52, age 55, the 85 factor, for example, in the education system—it doesn't impact on that.

Mr Bradley: Oh, it doesn't?

Mr Spina: It should not, because those are collective agreements. This does not make it mandatory. What it says is that it is not mandatory to retire at 65. You must not twist that, I say to my friend from St Catharines.

Mr Bradley: I didn't know.

Mr Spina: Oh, you're agreeing with it. I'm pleased to hear that. So you'll support this.

Mr Bradley: No, I didn't know what your position was.

Mr Spina: Oh, I see. It's very clear now, is it not? I'm very happy, because since we no longer have a pension in this House—well, at least we don't; you do, I know, the member for St Catharines. You've been here a bit longer than us, so you have a pension. Sometimes my standing comment to friends is that I'll look forward to retiring from this Legislature on my wife's teacher's pension, because she'll have one and I will not.

What we must keep in mind is that all of these measures add up to one thing, and that's respect: respect for seniors, for their contribution to Ontario's strength and prosperity, for what they still may be able to contribute and, more importantly, if they want to contribute to it. That's the reason we are supportive of this particular initiative that the Premier has brought forward. Our government is proud of its role also in honouring 1.5 million seniors, and I'm sure colleagues on both sides of the House join us in congratulating and thanking those remarkable residents of our province; people like Joan Pearce and her family and the representatives of all the other seniors in our province.

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In Ontario, we have legitimate concerns about the markets and retirement savings. We recognize the concerns and we're taking action. Our government proclaimed a number of measures contained in the Keeping the Promise for a Strong Economy Act of last year. These measures took effect on April 7, 2003, and include new powers for the Ontario Securities Commission like: to review the information that public companies provide to investors; to make rules to hold CEOs and CFOs accountable for the accuracy of their companies' financial statements; to make rules to ensure the audit committees of boards of directors play an appropriate role in ensuring the integrity of those financial statements; and finally, to impose fines for securities violations and to order offenders to give up the ill-gotten gains from the violations.

The government has also increased maximum court fines and lengthened prison terms for securities offences. I am fully supportive of this. We know that white-collar crime, or the abuse of power in a white-collar industry, is as bad as any other kind of crime and should be punished in the same way. The government intends to propose some other minor technical changes, following which we will implement the rest of the fall 2000 investor confidence initiatives. These include broader rights for secondary market investors to sue, and strong deterrents to poor disclosure practices. These initiatives will make it safer for seniors and all investors to invest in Ontario.

I'd like to refer to an announcement made recently by our government that affects senior Ontarians and in fact all Canadians. Ernie Eves, Ontario's Premier, participated on June 6 in the official opening ceremony for the new Juno Beach Centre in Normandy, France. In Novem-

ber 2002, Premier Eves announced that the government would provide \$1 million toward the construction of the new \$10-million centre.

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): Thank you, Jean Chrétien.

Mr Spina: The member from across the way, from—

Mr Caplan: Don Valley East.

Mr Spina: —Don Valley East, because I shouldn't mention his name—Mr Caplan—says, "Remember Prime Minister Chrétien." Interesting. If you look at the article, how hollow was their contribution? They started out at \$250,000 and, after the project went forward, they bellied up \$200,000, and guess what? It suddenly became a wonderful photo op for the Prime Minister to be there with the Prime Minister of France. Suddenly the feds are right there at the table to contribute to this wonderful monument which stands on the site where the Canadian soldiers landed on D-Day. It will be an educational facility commemorating the D-Day landings, the various theatres of war and the contribution made by Canadian civilians on the home front.

At this point I want to pay tribute to a couple of veterans from Brampton. We have many, but one individual I was very proud and very pleased to hear had the opportunity to go to the Juno Beach ceremonies was veteran Bert Post. In all fairness to Bert, it would have been very difficult to pay for a trip, but do you know what? All the employees of Hydro in Brampton chipped in and paid for Bert's airfare to go the Juno Beach ceremony. We're very proud that Bert had the opportunity to be there. Bert, thank you for your effort, thank you for being there on D-Day and thank you and Carol for being strong members of our community in Brampton. I look forward to seeing you next season at the Battalion hockey game. Do you know why? They have season's tickets right behind me and Clement. They're also good friends.

Mr Bradley: You've got to have a lot of money for that.

Mr Spina: Oh yes, for the Battalion.

Let me get back to the issue. Juno Beach, when fully completed, will feature displays informing visitors of all ages about Canada's participation in the war effort, as well as displays depicting life in Canada today.

More than 21,000 Canadian soldiers landed on Juno Beach on June 6, 1944, at a cost of 340 lives. Another 574 were wounded; 47 were taken prisoner. During the war, more than 45,000 Canadians lost their lives and another 55,000 were wounded. But more than 400,000 of Canada's one million volunteers were from Ontario, including veteran Bert Post.

I also want to compliment another long-time soldier who is very proud to sport his uniform and colours, and that's Joe Sellors. Joe Sellors is a piper with the Lorne Scots. My friend Joe is now getting on in years, but he still has the lungs to belt out the pipes at ceremonies in Brampton, and not just for the Lorne Scots but for others. Joe recently celebrated 60 years in uniform. He signed up when he was 17, and is very proud of the fact that he's

had 60 years in a uniform. We say to Joe, God bless you. Keep going, buddy. We look forward to seeing you and having you around for a long time.

Premier Eves also announced that the government is issuing a request for proposals for the construction of a veterans' memorial that will be located directly south of the Legislature at the northwest corner of College Street and Queen's Park Circle. Major General Richard Rohmer has been chosen to chair an advisory committee that will help select the winning design of that memorial. The project should be about \$1.5 million, and it will start early this fall.

What this all means, Mr Speaker, is that we are serious about our commitments to seniors—and we know you're not there yet, Speaker, so don't nod off on me—to meet their current needs and anticipate our future ones. Seniors have helped build our economy and shape our society. They continue to challenge our perception of aging with their ongoing contributions as mentors, community leaders, volunteers, and as people who have a phenomenal amount of energy for our citizens.

The initiatives I've outlined today reflect only a small part of our government's gratitude to seniors for what they've achieved in this province. I encourage all members to support Bill 43, the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act, 2003, to recognize both the contribution and the needs of the wonderful seniors in this province.

Mr Bradley: I think the first thing we have to recognize is that we're dealing with a time allocation motion this afternoon. That is a motion put by the government House leader which would cut off debate on an important piece of legislation, a piece of legislation which should have thorough debate and, I think, public hearings to allow people who are in favour, people who are against, and people who believe that there can be some changes that might be made to improve legislation—to allow them all to have that kind of input, so they can visit places like Brampton, St Catharines, Sudbury, Sault Ste Marie and other places around the province. Unfortunately, the style of the government has been to limit very severely the amount of time that is allocated for public hearing purposes—that is, for careful analysis of legislation put before us. Sometimes there are some good aspects to a bill and some bad aspects to a bill, and I think it can only be improved by public input and by clause-by-clause analysis wherein amendments can be placed to the legislation. Unfortunately, the government is interested once again in rushing legislation through the House.

Let me remind the members of this House that the government of Ontario and the Premier, Ernie Eves, kept this House out of session, did not allow this House to sit, from December 12 of the year 2002 until—May 1 was actually the first time we actually had a question period: May 1, 2003. That's closing in on five months that the House was not in session. Most people in the province assumed it was in session. They see the federal House—the federal House was back in session in January of this

year. So when they see a House, a legislative body on television, they assume we must be sitting. That in itself is an abrogation of the responsibility of the government. That is a denial of the democratic process. Governments, by and large, do not want to sit, because that's the time they're most accountable. Questions are directed from the opposition to the government benches. There are a few government questions asked of ministers. They're usually what we call lob-ball questions, such as, "Minister, how is it that you are able to do such a good job?" Those are the tough, penetrating questions that government backbenchers over the years—including this government—have asked of cabinet ministers. The government really doesn't want the House in session because of the tough questions in the House and the media scrums that are part of the everyday activities here. That is where the media meets members of the cabinet and other members of the Legislature outside to ask us the tough questions. So by keeping the House out of session, this government ends up denying us that democratic opportunity and that kind of accountability for which many of the people in the armed forces, who were just mentioned, died many years ago, for a thorough democratic system.

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Second is this constant application of time allocation motions. Motions designed to close off debate are not healthy for democracy.

Third, I remind members of this House that this government, on at least two occasions, has revised the procedural rules of the Legislature. Now, that's dry stuff for the average person in Ontario. They're not going to be leaning forward in their seats when you have a debate on procedural matters. What it means, though, is that the government is able to grease the skids for all its legislation. In my experience in this House, for all governments of any political stripe, the best legislation is passed when it has had the most scrutiny, public input and hearings, clear analysis and has taken some time to go through the House. So if the House had come back in mid-March of this year as it was destined to do—I would have liked it back even earlier, I might add, but it was destined to come back in mid-March—then we would have had more time to deal with legislation of this particular kind.

Another way in which the government has, in my view, diminished the democratic process in this province is by allowing political parties to spend more money during campaigns and to collect more money—that is, to raise more money in individual donations to candidates and parties. That means that money plays a more central role in politics than it should. Remember during the next campaign that there will be two important exemptions. One will be the leader's tour. You can be assured with Mr Eves, the Premier of this province, that it will be a first-class tour, the most expensive tour you can have. There's also what they call polling, which is loosely defined as telephone calls which are made during the campaign. They clearly should both be part of the overall

expenditure cap that is there, but the government has instead changed it to allow money to play a greater role in politics than it should. I must say, with some of the questioning that's taking place in the House, particularly as it relates to the chief fundraiser and the chief contributor of the Conservative Party—there have been several questions on this—that shows what happens when money plays a more important role than it should in politics.

Another way is the shortening of the election campaign to 28 days. That militates in favour of those who have money and will use the public media advertising rather than the on-the-ground foot soldiers, if we may use that terminology, who work on a campaign. Those are usually of greater importance to parties that have less money than the governing party of the day, in this case the Conservative Party of Ontario.

Another way I think there is an abuse of this process, and it fits in with this time allocation motion, is the amount of government advertising that we're seeing at the present time. There's a virtual deluge, a carpet bombing in this province with government advertising which is clearly self-congratulatory and partisan. Any objective observer would conclude that. I'm sure in their heart of hearts many government members would conclude that. That is something that has to end. As a matter of fact, tomorrow I will have the opportunity to present my bill for consideration in the Legislature. I'm sure that if there were a genuinely free vote and free consciences, it would be supported by members of the House.

If you turn on the television set now, you have Premier Eves purportedly trying to get people in the bordering states to invest in Ontario. What it's really all about—because these ads are not running in Kentucky, Arkansas or Utah; they're running in border states, saying, "Why don't you invest in Ontario?"—is a feel-good message for the people of Ontario. My friend from southwestern Ontario knows that cable television and satellite television allow these ads to be pumped back into Ontario. That's what it's all about. Premier Harris did that before the last election. Premier Eves is doing that.

That comes from people like Guy Giorno, who by the way is going to have a major event happening in his personal life very soon. I'm happy to say in this House that our friend Guy Giorno is going to be getting married, and we wish him well. I certainly wish he will take a vacation or at least a honeymoon that will extend well beyond the campaign period of time, and I certainly put that emphasis formally.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: You're right. Conservative backbenchers hope the same thing. I think we're on the same wavelength in that regard.

I don't know how I got on to Guy Giorno's name. I always seem to get on to that name. This is the 1,756th time I've mentioned Guy Giorno in this House. I want to wish him well in that regard, and I hope he takes as much time away from this place as possible.

To go back to government advertising, another kind of advertising we had—I looked at the SARS ads. The first ones from when this government was scared—what's the word I want to use?—silly of the SARS scare were quite legitimate. They said, "Here's what the problem is. Here's what you, the people of Ontario, should do." As soon as they thought they had it licked, they started saying, "Here's what your government is doing," and then the little thing at the bottom that says, "Making health care work for you." The same thing is happening with West Nile virus.

Ontario savings bonds: instead of saying, "Why don't we buy Ontario savings bonds?", they have to say, "Oh, don't you realize Ontario has the best economy in the G8?" or something like that, and they've created these jobs and so on.

It's all an excuse to use taxpayers' dollars to finance a political message, time and again. Even the taxpayers' federation understands this, and even some government members have admitted this.

I remember I was on a television program on Global TV with the Speaker back in 1999, before the last election, and the Speaker, who at that time was not the Speaker, said it was excessive. He said, "You know, I was in the dressing room with the players after the game, and we talked about it and they all thought it was excessive." That's a topic for another day. In fact, that's a topic for tomorrow. I know that if there's any member on the government side who has a conscience, and I truly believe there are members with a conscience, they will be voting—if I may do some campaigning ahead, with your permission, Mr Speaker, I know they will not only be speaking in favour of my legislation, which will allow the Provincial Auditor to vet this and make sure there's no partisan advertising, but they will also vote en masse for the bill I'm going to present to the House.

If they do so, I'll be the first to stand up and applaud them and thank them for their generosity.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I appreciate the opportunity this afternoon to get up and debate this piece of public business we have in front of us.

It's interesting, as the member for Nickel Belt said a few minutes ago, that we're back into our routine we've become relatively comfortable and familiar with here on Wednesday afternoons. Normally, it's a time allocation motion. That seems to be part of the rotation now. We brought in new rules. It takes a week, at most two weeks, to get a piece of legislation through this place—something that will affect all of us, often in not insignificant ways. As the member from St Catharines just said, we just push it through with no consideration of the need for public input and for opposition members to take the time to vet it properly, to have committee hearings, to introduce amendments and to have those amendments considered to see if they're of any value.

These days, legislation comes in here that is usually driven ideologically by the government, with no provision for challenge whatsoever. It's the way it is around here. On Wednesday, we come in, we have a time allo-

cation motion, it's passed, and then within a matter of a day or so, we move to third reading and that business is over.

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It's unfortunate, because it adds to that sense out there of cynicism in the public that really they have no say, that their voice isn't important, that they as the public have no power. That's why we have made such a huge effort going into the election that's coming up to highlight the reality of public power and how it's so important that people have their say; that they understand that when they elect their member to this place, their member should have the opportunity to participate fully in all debate about things that affect them, legislation that we pass that becomes the rules by which we all live, the rules by which we interact with each other, support each other in community; and that in fact we should be having more opportunity to participate; that we should be taking more of this public policy out and around the province for hearings so people can participate and give us input and get back to a democratic system where people actually feel they have a place, they have a voice, and then maybe they'll participate more fully, as we want them to, in the elections that come up.

So that's why we are promoting our platform, our proposals, in this election, which in fact contains a piece that speaks to fairly significant change in the way we do politics in this province in introducing a proportional representation approach, where everybody has more chance of having their voice heard; where there's more opportunity for parties of various sorts to come forward, reflecting the multiple interests of people out there in all kinds of things, to be able to bring it into this House, the people's place, to contribute to the debate so that we have better legislation, better rules, better ways of supporting each other and protecting particularly those things that are vulnerable and at risk out there.

Today we're talking about a bill that will introduce a new policy around property tax and home ownership and relief for seniors. As you've heard members of the opposition and my own colleague from Nickel Belt this afternoon, we have some real concern about this piece of public business. We think it will be more divisive than it will be bringing people together, co-operative in terms of what we need to do for and with each other to create a quality of life that speaks to health and well-being for everybody who calls Ontario home.

This is a pre-election bribe, in our opinion, that will give by far the greatest benefit to wealthy seniors with expensive properties. We're asking the question: why are the Conservatives giving rich people like Ted Rogers, Ken Thomson and Peter Munk a gift of some \$18,000 each? Why would we do that? Why would we give money away to people who really don't need it when we need it so desperately ourselves for our health care system, for our education system, to protect our environment, to manage our resources, to do all those things we know are necessary if we're going to maintain a standard

and a quality of life for everybody in this province that reflects the actual wealth that's out there?

Most seniors, in my opinion and in my interaction with them, would rather have good public home care, affordable rents and hydro costs that don't spike through the roof. In short, they need public power. The Conservatives have failed them on all these issues. We have—if people will take the time and go to our Web site at www.publicpower.ca and take a look—all kinds of things that I will speak to in a few minutes which would be, in our view, much better in terms of helping the lot of seniors, including them in the community in ways that are healthy and inclusive and providing them with the support they need in their waning years to live lives that are full and full of opportunity, interaction and joy.

The member for Nickel Belt spoke a few minutes ago about what's happening in her backyard in the area of community care and access, the change she's beginning to detect in the approach they're taking in the Sudbury area. They're no longer going to do home care. She says they are homemaking. She says they don't have the money. Well, let me tell her that it won't be long until they're actually doing what the CCAC in Sault Ste Marie is doing. You see, the CCAC in Sault Ste Marie wasn't one of those boards that got whacked back when the new legislation came in—remember the hostile takeover of CCACs? Our CCAC was already toeing the line and listening to what the government was saying in terms of where they're going with new regulations and the doing away with homemaking. So they're sending money back. They don't even need the money they have because they're giving such little service. It is becoming so narrow in terms of who can qualify and who can't any more that they can't spend the money.

They sent back half a million dollars three years ago. Last year, they sent back \$750,000. This year, they're sending back \$240,000 to the government that they can't spend, because of applying the new regulations. They're doing it by the book in Sault Ste Marie, which they'll be doing in Sudbury in the very near future, and Sudbury will be in the same boat. The government over here will be laughing all the way to the bank looking for new ways to give Peter Munk more money, I figure. They don't want to keep this \$250,000 in public coffers just in case somebody might suggest they do something useful with it by way of community support programs, health, education, whatever. They will want to give it away so that it's not there, and they'll give it by way of tax break again, as they've always done, as they've done for the last eight years, to those in the province who need it the least.

I say, look out, Sudbury. You think it's bad now? Just wait and see what happens. I know in Sault Ste Marie, and I know it very personally, that if they come and determine in conversation with a senior that the senior doesn't need or want to be bathed, for example, there will be no homemaking—no bathing, no homemaking. When you're older, one of the last things you want is somebody who's not familiar to you coming in and doing personal

hygiene-bathing kinds of things for you. Lots of couples do it for each other. All they need is somebody to come in and do a little vacuuming and cleaning and keep the place in relatively good shape so that they can stay in the place longer. That's what they want. That's how we contribute to keeping seniors in their homes longer, so that they don't have to go into institutions that ultimately cost us more in the long run.

If you want to do something helpful for seniors, improve the services that are available, change the regulations, stop this diminishing of opportunity through CCACs for seniors, and put more money in there, not this tax break that's going to go primarily to putting more money into the pockets of some of the more wealthy of our citizens.

The existing seniors' tax credit had an income cap that made sure it got to those who needed it the most. This new proposal actually sends thousands of dollars to seniors with million-dollar homes. It's hard to fathom how they think these things up in the first place, and then how they think they're going to get away with it. That money could have been spent on health care.

This bill also says that seniors shouldn't pay for education. Most seniors understand that a strong education system benefits all age groups. As a matter of fact, anybody out there with half a brain will understand that if you want to have a healthy economy, you've got to educate your children so that they're ready to participate and take part in the economy, become the leaders in the economy so that you can actually then provide the services that all of us will need eventually when we become seniors. It makes no sense whatsoever to be relieving anybody of the responsibility they have to contribute in some meaningful way to the education of our children. In the society that we live in today, one hand washes the other. Families that have kids going to school pay taxes so that seniors can have health care. Seniors who need health care pay taxes so that families with children going to school can educate them. It's called co-operation. It's called working together. It's called, in some instances, how you do democracy well. In this instance, this just doesn't make any sense.

Anywhere you go in the world today, you'll see more and more government jurisdictions spending more and more on education, understanding that investment in education is the best way to invest in your future, making sure that your children are well educated, that everybody is well educated, that we have a lifelong learning mentality about education and that we have the resources to make sure people can get in and out of that system as they need in order to retrain or train and to adjust to new realities in the workplace. Seniors know we all have to contribute. Everybody has to contribute to making sure that is the case.

1650

Get ready for a bunch of ads, I suggest, as the members for Nickel Belt and St Catharines said a few minutes ago. Get ready for a bunch of ads over the

summer about this, because this is part of a pre-election strategy.

As a matter of fact, it's a little weird. The member for Nickel Belt said it was bizarre, or she read a piece out of the paper that talked about this being bizarre. It's a little strange. We came back here a few weeks ago, after a very long hiatus of no public business being done here on behalf of the people of the province, to what the government suggested was a very heavy agenda, but so far there is no agenda. As a matter of fact, what's bizarre and strange about this is that now we're starting to debate the actual platform of the government. This is what the government was going to take out on the hustings for the people of the province to make a judgment about, using this as to whether they should continue to be the government or not, and here we are in the House this afternoon speaking to a time allocation motion on a piece of public business that started out as part of the government's campaign platform.

I'm not quite sure how all this fits. I'm not sure what the process is here. What are they going to do next? What is the platform going to be ultimately, at the end of the day, if they've already done most of what they said they were going to do, what they were going to bring out and propose to the public? I'm suggesting it's really a strange way of doing public business, and I think everybody out there ought to be aware of that.

They're ramming through a bill here that's going to have some significant impact and effect on the resources that will be available to the province to provide education. If you look at what's going on out there you understand the need for dollars in the education system at the elementary and secondary level. If you listen to Rozanski, we're expected to immediately put in \$2 billion, and after that to continue to grow the budget as the need demands and the cost of living grows.

We're in need of some significant and serious investment of education dollars at the post-secondary level. This year we have a double cohort of students from grades 12 and 13 going out there into colleges and universities. We're not quite sure, first of all, if they're going to get into the schools they want to get into and, then, when they do ultimately get in, if the schools are going to be able to deal with them in an effective and educationally beneficial way. There is talk of some schools, yes, accepting all kinds of students, but then ending up with classes of 1,000 or 1,500 kids in auditoriums, watching televisions because they don't have enough professors to actually teach the classes. Is that the kind of thing we want evolving in this province? Is that what we want happening out there because this government, in its desperate attempt to get re-elected, wants to somehow provide to seniors a little goody here that really won't amount to much for most of them but will amount to a lot for some who really don't need it and are quite well off to begin with? Is that the way we want to do public business: divide and conquer; pick some groups that you bestow blessings on and some other groups that you demonize?

In this election we already know that the government is going to pick on teachers. They have already begun the demonizing process. They're going to pick on immigrants. That's already happening. That's again a pattern that we've seen—this is the third time—as they go to the polls. It's divide and conquer. It's the politics of fear and resentment. It's not politics that leads to growth and hope and excitement about the future, in my view, and it puts a bunch of people down whom we need to participate in the economy and in the community if we're going to adjust to the new realities that are out there.

In the bill we have seniors—owners and tenants—getting their entire education property tax rebated. The rebate amounts to 0.335% of assessed value, or \$670 on a \$200,000 house. That's a pretty nice house. There's no limit on the size of the rebate, so a \$6-million property would get you \$20,100. That's where we get into the stratosphere of the Peter Munks, the Ken Thomsons and the Ted Rogers of the world. The Conservatives estimate the cost at \$450 million and the average benefit at \$475. Four hundred and fifty million dollars would buy you a lot of education.

Seniors will have to apply for the rebate separately from their taxes so it will not be effected by the income tax system. The need to make a separate application could mean that some seniors with low education or language skills don't receive the benefit. We've heard, in the not too distant past, of the thousands of seniors across this province who haven't accessed the GIS, the federal supplement for low-income seniors that's available. Thousands of seniors didn't access that because they didn't know about it. This will be the same thing.

The National Post, not a left-wing paper by any stretch of the imagination, also estimates that the separate administration to do this will cost the government another \$15 million compared to the cost of doing it under the income tax system. Fifteen million dollars is a lot of cheese, as the member from Niagara Centre would say. That's a lot of money that could be spent delivering public services and providing education and health care for seniors and students across this province.

I suggest to you that there are all kinds of things we could be doing for seniors and families across this province that aren't included in this bill and that will be affected by this bill in a very negative way.

I introduced to you a few minutes ago the platform of the New Democratic Party going into the election coming up. It's called Public Power: Practical Solutions for Ontario. We have a number of practical solutions that we'd like you to look at where seniors are concerned, seniors out there who may be watching. We want you to go to our Web site publicpower.ca and take a look at some of the sections where we talk about improved home care; where we say we'll protect tenants by freezing rents for two years and bringing back rent control, which would be very helpful to seniors. We talk about tying pensions to the cost of living and protecting your pensions, protecting the investments seniors have out

there in various instruments so that they don't lose their value and, in some instances, don't disappear altogether.

We talk about protecting your savings in our platform. It's very comprehensive and detailed. People should look at it. You've got time to look at it now, because the government has chosen not to call the election right away, as we had thought they might. Maybe it's an ideal opportunity for you to go to the Web site publicpower.ca and take a look at what Howard Hampton and the NDP are proposing: improvements to home care; we're proposing to freeze rents and bring in rent control; we're talking about tying pensions to the cost of living, indexing pensions, which should be of real interest to many seniors out there who are seeing the value of their pensions eroding year after year, as the cost of living goes up and there's no increase for them.

I can't count the number of seniors who come to me and say, "Everything is going up. The cost of housing is going up. The cost of food is going up. The cost of clothing is going up. We have to pay all kinds of fees for our health care now. But our income never goes up. There's no indexing there for us. As a matter of fact, the money we set aside," they say to me, "by way of investment to produce the income money" we need to take care of ourselves is diminishing as well, because they're losing their value out there in the stock market, if that's where you have it.

I suggest that this piece of legislation we're ramming through today by way of time allocation motion is not going to do much for the seniors; this government is going to pretend it will with the advertising campaign you're going to see. If you want to look at something that will be of value immediately, in very practical ways, to every senior and every senior's family across this province, I suggest you go to the Public Power Web site and take a look at what we New Democrats, with Howard Hampton as our leader, are proposing in this coming election. It's really exciting. It's good stuff, and I think it will be good for Ontario.

1700

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): Mr Speaker, it gives me particular pleasure to rise to speak before you today on a time allocation motion about our government's commitment to seniors through Bill 43, the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act, 2003.

As I think we all know, the bill proposes to complete the government's commitment to reduce residential education property taxes through tax relief provided to our seniors across the province. I don't believe that this particular bill could come forward at a more opportune time as we officially recognize the contributions of our seniors by celebrating Seniors' Month in this very month, June, and I believe there is much to celebrate. We owe much to the hard work and the sacrifices of the 1.5 million seniors who live right here in Ontario.

The official opening last Friday of the Juno Beach Centre in France, I believe, is a poignant reminder to all of us of the tremendous sacrifices made by those brave soldiers on June 6, 1944, known as D-Day. We all owe

our seniors a huge debt of gratitude, especially those who made the ultimate sacrifice for the freedom we enjoy today. Those seniors are the people who have helped to create a prosperous Ontario of which we can all be very proud. We recognize that seniors are vital to our communities, and we honour them for their contributions.

I am pleased to talk about support for this worthwhile bill and to outline what I believe are some of the many other ways this government is honouring its commitment to seniors.

We're undertaking more initiatives to protect the health and well-being of seniors. Much of what we enjoy today in Ontario is the result of hard work and sacrifices that have been made by our seniors. They deserve, and I believe they expect, our respect and appreciation through the bill we are debating today, as well as the many initiatives that are proposed in the budget.

Seniors are the most vulnerable to illness. Therefore, our government has addressed this and provided increased support to assist seniors who are affected by the many diseases that are commonly associated with aging, such as eye disease, osteoporosis and dementia. To reflect the higher cost of drugs and using our drug programs, we announced that we would provide almost \$200 million more in 2003-04 to cover the increased cost of drugs. Our government spent approximately \$2.1 billion for drug programs in 2002-03, which is an increase of about 112% since 1994-95.

In the 2003 budget, we announced that spending on the Ontario drug benefit program would increase to \$2.3 billion, which is an increase of 132% since 1994-95.

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): How much?

Ms Mushinski: That's 132%. In fact, since 1995 more than 1,300 products have been added to the formulary, bringing the total to more than 3,200 prescription drugs available today. Ontario's drug benefit program is the most comprehensive of its kind in Canada.

We are working to help our seniors in other important ways. To assist seniors living in retirement homes, the province provided \$1.1 million to the Ontario Residential Care Association to support its complaints, response and information service for all retirement homes and home residences in Ontario. The service includes full-time staff to help seniors and their families resolve retirement home complaints and to give information about the full range of service and accommodation options available to seniors.

In the past few weeks I have held a series of crime forums in my great riding of Scarborough Centre. One of those was particularly geared toward community safety for seniors. To help prevent fraud against seniors, the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services provides consumer protection for seniors through regular press releases called Scam Scan, and delivers our annual Fraud Free calendars for seniors. The Ministry of Consumer and Business Services also helps to fund the operation of the Ontario Provincial Police's PhoneBusters, which is a toll-free national telemarketing call centre that educates

the public about specific fraudulent telemarketing pitches and assists callers through senior volunteer counsellors. We all know, I believe, that telemarketing fraud is one of the newer crimes of the past few years and I think it's important that we keep on top of this new kind of technological fraudulent activity.

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing supports an affordable housing program which will provide \$489.2 million over the next five years to help increase the supply of affordable housing in the province.

In August 2001, the Minister of Finance announced that the province was providing a property tax exemption for residences built or modified to accommodate seniors or persons who have disabilities. This program allows for 10% of the assessed value of new homes built to accommodate seniors and people with disabilities who would otherwise require care in an institution to be exempted from property tax. I think that's a very important initiative that encourages seniors to remain in their own homes as long as possible, something that many seniors in my riding have often told me they want.

The province also continues to maintain its assistance to low-income seniors through the guaranteed annual income system, or GAINS, as it known for short. GAINS ensures a guaranteed monthly minimum income for low-income seniors receiving the federal government's old age security and guaranteed income supplement. Approximately 111,000 seniors benefit from this program, which provides a monthly benefit of up to a maximum of \$83 per recipient. Our government will continue, with the help of its various ministries, to provide services that will improve the quality of life for seniors, something we are strongly committed to.

To keep our seniors safe and secure, the province is also maintaining its support of communities. We're supporting our police and other public safety workers who risk their lives to protect us. Since 1997, the government has invested more than \$150 million in a wide range of initiatives designed to create a safer, more secure Ontario for our families, and especially for our seniors. Some of these initiatives include the community policing partnership program, which has put more than 1,000 new police officers on the street. Furthermore, I was particularly proud when Premier Eves recently visited Scarborough to tell us that the government will be adding 1,000 new police officers to our streets in Ontario. As well, special squads have been established to combat organized crime. The Community Emergency Volunteers Response has been designed to become a vital component in the province's overall emergency and disaster management strategy. The program is encouraging retired public safety, security and health professionals to join.

1710

Efficient transit is another important element for seniors, especially of course in Toronto, in their quality of life and communities. This government has a strong and continued commitment to improving transit and highways in Ontario. The government is working in partnership with the federal government and munici-

palities to fast-track more frequent GO trains on existing corridors, and I'm delighted that there is an added train to the system going through Scarborough every morning, and providing new GO Transit services to cities and towns surrounding Toronto and other new transit services. The Provincial Transportation Investment Plan will provide \$1.25 billion for interregional transit expansion in the Golden Horseshoe region. It will invest \$1 billion for GO Transit base capital needs, provide \$750 million for the municipal transit renewal program—something, I know, is very important to you, Jean-Marc—and invest \$250 million for strategic expansion projects in urban areas outside the Golden Horseshoe region.

For seniors in the GTA dependent on bus services, SuperBuild will help fund the initial phase of a new GTA bus rapid transit system, or BRT system for short, to allow for faster travel across the top of Toronto. The BRT system will eventually extend from the Oakville GO station to the Pickering GO station, through York region. This new network will involve an east-west rapid transit line connecting Durham, York, Peel and Halton regions. It will also include new rapid transit links to the TTC subway system in Toronto, including Kennedy station in my riding of Scarborough Centre, new bus-only shoulder lanes on Highway 403 and new priority bus lanes on key regional roads. The GO Transit/BRT will assist seniors using public transit in reaching their destinations with ease.

For seniors in northern Ontario, the government is also proposing funding to help develop highways. Highways 11 and 69 will be expanded at a cost of \$370 million this year.

When the seniors of today were younger, people often stayed in communities where they were raised. They worked, they raised their families and they eventually retired in their home towns. Today, that is not quite as common. The children of seniors often move away to bigger centres in search of employment and opportunities. This government is committed to creating tax incentive zones in rural and northern communities that will help to attract jobs and investment.

Tax incentive zones will create long-term economic growth and give young people the opportunity to remain in the communities where they grew up. Premier Ernie Eves has announced that he intends to designate all of northern Ontario as the first location for a series of pilot tax incentive zones, effective January 1, 2004.

We believe that seniors want to live in towns and cities that are safe and secure. In the 2003 Ontario budget, the government outlined a number of measures to ensure that people in the province can depend on protection where they live. This means that police and other public safety workers who risk their lives to protect Ontarians would receive additional support. The government will double the funding for women's centres for services that help vulnerable women to find jobs. The funding would provide additional support to 28 women's centres across the province to provide victims of domestic violence with job training, mentoring and

network supports that lead to economic independence and allow women to permanently remove themselves from abusive situations.

I also want to emphasize, as Finance Minister Janet Ecker has done before me, that the new relief measure, the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act, 2003, would not affect our education funding. Even while continuing to cut education property taxes in 2003-04, the government has committed more than \$15.3 billion in funding to strengthen the existing public education system. Spending on public education is expected to increase to \$16.2 billion for the 2005-06 school year, which is more education spending than any other previous provincial government.

In addition, this government has provided seniors with a varied and effective support structure, as mentioned by my colleague the Honourable Carl DeFaria, Minister of Citizenship and minister responsible for seniors. The 2003 Ontario budget also provides for an increase of \$100 million in annual funding for long-term-care services. Ontario's osteoporosis action plan provides \$7 million annually to improve prevention, management and treatment. And \$10 million will be provided annually to give seniors access to 15,000 additional cataract surgeries each year. I know there is huge and growing demand for that by our aging population and I think that is an extremely important initiative.

Taken together, all of these measures add up to one thing: respect, respect for our seniors, for the contribution they have made to Ontario's strength and prosperity and for what they may still be able to contribute. The initiatives that I have outlined today reflect only a small part of our government's gratitude to seniors for what they have achieved and for what they have given to this province. Our government is proud of its role in honouring Ontario's 1.5 million seniors. I'm sure that my colleagues on both sides of this House will join me in congratulating and especially thanking these remarkable residents of our province.

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): I'm pleased to rise today to speak on Bill 43, which will affect all residential seniors' education property tax.

I was listening to all the speakers prior to me standing up in the House today. I would say that probably I would have been in favour of such a bill if we had only included those with low incomes and also if we had in place enough social housing to respond to demand.

Even though the member said a little while ago that the government is going to meet the requirements for seniors in housing, it is not true. At the present time we know municipalities are looking for programs so they can build homes or housing developments for seniors.

In what has been discussed this afternoon, I wonder if the members on the other side really know the meaning of this bill. The member for Brampton Centre says he doesn't know how many healthy individuals will receive this tax credit. People have been calling my office and we have been receiving a lot of calls ever since the government announced this program. We don't know when it

will come into effect. But I'd like to know, what is it? Is it a tax credit? Is it going to be a tax reimbursement? Is it going to be a tax rebate?

1720

In the bill, we refer 17 times to tax credits. Already there's a tax credit that exists in your tax return for the seniors. So right now I wouldn't say that the government is misleading the people of this province, but a lot of people are telling me that they look at the bill through the Internet, because they were already able to receive a credit for the property tax.

I feel that at the present time we have no regulations in place. Subsection 3(1) is clear. The tax credit "is to be calculated in accordance with the regulations." Where are the regulations? No one is aware. Not one of us who is talking on this bill knows what the regulations are going to be. We don't know if everyone in this province who is over 65 will benefit. In Ontario, we have at the present time approximately 1.5 million people aged 65 and over. I wouldn't say 1.5 million houses or apartments will benefit from this tax credit.

The government is saying that it is going to cost \$450 million. Out of this \$450 million, I would say probably 80% of that will go to the rich. When I say it will go to the rich, it's those people who have a revenue of millions of dollars. They have homes where the value of the assessment is \$10 million, \$11 million. They will probably benefit by an \$18,000 tax credit.

I remember when the government decided, through Bill 210, to send a cheque of \$75 for the electricity during the month of December. That was a beautiful gift at Christmastime, but if you people had taken the time at the present time to look at this electricity fiasco that you have created, instead of coming down with this education tax credit you could have turned around and said, "OK. For the seniors, what we should proceed with is cancelling the delivery charge, cancelling the transportation charge those people are paying for."

Hon Mr Baird: You voted for it.

Mr Lalonde: I'm going to tell you, Mr Minister of Energy on the other side, that at the present time I have Mrs Gratton from Lefaivre. She lives alone in the house, in Lefaivre. Her bill last March was \$1,460. I called Hydro One. What a fiasco. No one seemed to know what they were doing and what they were supposed to be doing. My calculation shows that she's paying an extra \$900 because of that fiasco. It is there. I'm going to fight right up to the end.

The government is going to spend \$450 million. In return, the seniors will have to pay for additional health care. They will have to pay for home care. Also, just yesterday I spoke to the minister. How come the disabled people now have to pay for transportation for the day program? It was all news to the minister. But I did receive a phone call right after noon today, telling me, "Yes, we didn't cut down the services, but we have asked the children's aid society or the services to the children and adults to realign their expenses because they have to give more services." They have to give more services.

So it is the same in this matter here. The people are going to get a credit. In my area, I would say the average is going to be \$225 a year, which amounts to probably \$20 a month. Mind you, they will have to pay for any home care that is required because the government last year cut down 115,000 home care hours to the senior citizens of Ontario. Is this fair? I don't think so.

I have a letter here that was written by Carol Burrows. She's the president of the Council on Aging of Ottawa. I'm just going to read a few lines. "The Council on Aging of Ottawa strongly objects to this proposal. It is wrong to move away from a base of universal support of all essential social services by deselecting contributors from one or another segment of society."

It goes on: "The proposed education property tax refund would seem to be at odds with this theme of building bridges between seniors and younger age groups."

Even the seniors are against that, because they know the intention of this government to proceed with that \$450-million rebate, they will have to pay in return—Mr Bourbonnais, Mr Parisien, and this poor lady, an 88-year-old lady from St Eugène, Madame Brunet. Eighty-eight years old. She cannot get a single hour of home services, not a single hour, because the CCAC in our area says, "We don't have any money."

Also, if I go down to the Sarsfield or the Navan area, there's no way that we could get French services to visit those seniors because they haven't got the funding. They have to take them from Ottawa to drive down to Sarsfield or to Notre-Dame-Des-Champs or Navan. They just can't get the people to drive down.

Hon Mr Baird: Did you promise that woman?

Mr Lalonde: I will promise this woman any time. When Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal Party form the next government, we will respond to the francophone services in Ontario. You've been lacking in giving those services.

The seniors in the rural areas don't have any public transportation. This government has given \$9 million to DiagnostiCare to support them in the x-ray clinics that we have. DiagnostiCare received the \$9 million and decided to close down the x-ray clinic in Rockland, in Plantagenet, in Alfred and in Embrun. But all the time they had the \$9 million to improve the equipment. They sold their company and closed all the x-rays that we have in our area.

Mr Beaubien: I know the time is short. However, it's a pleasure for me to rise today to speak on Bill 43, which is the seniors' tax credit. It's also interesting to follow my colleague from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell. It's always a pleasure to talk with him. It's kind of nice to see him animated today in the House.

There are 1.5 million people in the province of Ontario, out of roughly 12 million, who are over the age of 65. I keep hearing that Ted Rogers and the people who live in \$7-million homes are going to overly benefit, or in a manner that's not fair. I don't know what the point is. In my riding, there are not too many people who live in

\$7-million homes. I think the average price of homes in my riding is probably around \$130,000 to \$150,000.

I would also like to put on the record that 49% of seniors, people over 65 years old, in this province live on incomes of less than \$25,000 a year. Another 33%, which is 82% of the population of Ontario, live with less than \$50,000 a year. So there's no doubt that yes, there's the odd person who's been fortunate in life, certainly more fortunate than many of us, to be able to live in \$5-million, \$7-million and \$10-million homes, and maybe they will benefit. But the large majority, 82%, of seniors in this province live with less than \$50,000 a year. Even more seriously, 49% of those live on an income of less than \$25,000 a year. This credit will help these people maintain their homes; it will help these people to stay in their homes. It will certainly help them a little bit.

1730

Is it going to be the be-all and end-all of everything? No, it's not. But I'm sure it's very difficult for members on the opposite side of the House to speak against this particular bill. On the one hand they say, "The seniors are lacking this." But on the other hand, "No, no. We're going to vote against this tax credit." But it's not unusual for them to vote against any tax credit. For the past eight years, I don't think they have ever voted for a tax credit for anyone in Ontario, so I'm not surprised that they would not support a tax credit for people over 65 years old. I know in my own constituency—

Interjection.

Mr Beaubien: —and I challenge the member on the other side—we're getting an awful lot of calls from people wanting to know, "How do I apply for this credit?" as opposed to saying, "No, I don't want the credit." I haven't received one call in my constituency office from seniors who say, "I do not want the credit." They want the credit.

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): I rise to speak on this bill, and I will explain why I and members on this side of the House are opposed to it. It's very simple.

I heard the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex speak about his version of this act. He talks about this as if it's just home property tax relief.

First of all, this type of legislation is fundamentally wrong. Why? Because it takes \$450 million—that's what is estimated—from public education.

What the members forget to talk about, and I've noticed this, is that "home property taxes" means—this is in the bill—"taxes levied under section 257.7 of the Education Act in respect of real property." What does that mean? It means that what we're doing here is a pre-election gimmick to try to buy votes.

I've had calls in my office. As a matter of fact, I've had some letters. Once the public and the seniors understand that this is the education portion of their property tax, they understand something fundamental about a society that is responsible as a whole to educate the young, just as the 30-somethings are responsible for hip

replacements and health care tax. That is fundamentally the reason we are opposed to this gimmick.

I'm going to read from one of my constituents who wrote to me. What he said is this: "What responsible and caring grandparent really wants what Mr Eves is offering in his election promises? To sacrifice your grandchildren's chance for a good education and a brighter future for the sake of saving a couple of hundred tax dollars is the height of selfishness and egotism."

Interjection: He's a senior, too.

Ms Di Cocco: And he's a senior citizen.

I have another letter. This letter states:

"Dear MPP:

"I do not want my education taxes rebated. Our public education system is too valuable to our society..... This is just another step in the systematic destruction of public education." This is what this bill is fundamentally about.

I want to talk about what is really needed to assist our seniors, because, yes, they've sacrificed long and hard and they do need assistance—not these types of gimmicks. What they need is more and better home care. We, the Liberals, on this side of the House, want to ensure that home care services, including basic homemaking and personal support services, are available to seniors who need them. Our investment is going to mean an extra \$365 per person.

We need more affordable housing. On this side of the House, we've made a commitment to build 20,000 affordable housing units for low-income Ontarians, including seniors. That's what's needed.

We will expand seniors' centres that provide social and recreational activities and services to enhance seniors' quality of life. That's incredibly important.

Do you know something? I find it amazing, because what has happened in this province is that we now have higher nursing home fees. Last year alone, it cost seniors more than \$500 each to be able to live in long-term care—\$500 more.

We have lower nursing home standards. They removed nursing home standards that made sure that all residents received at least 2.25 hours of daily nursing care. We don't have that any more.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): What about a bath?

Ms Di Cocco: We don't even have any standards for baths. They're lucky if they get one bath a week. That is what real care is for our seniors.

Do you know what? We have underfunded our nursing homes so that seniors receive less care than other jurisdictions. We have fewer inspections.

We want to talk about caring for our seniors? I can tell you what's been missing here. The government of the day, the Conservatives, have done a great injustice to this province in undermining our care for seniors.

One of the things that really, really offends me is when they propagate these kinds of gimmicks. They do so as if it's property tax in general. They don't even have the courtesy and, I would like to suggest, the ethics to clarify what that property tax is on. All they talk about is Ontario home property tax relief. They make sure the

words "education portion of that" are not in the title of the bill. That is interesting to me, because I don't understand why, if this is such a great idea, the Conservatives don't talk about the education portion of the property tax.

I can tell you that I've spoken to many people, and when I say, "You know, there's a bill coming out, and this bill is going to provide home property tax relief for seniors," everybody says, "What a good idea." Then, when I say that it's the education portion of their property tax, suddenly the tone changes. It changes because we have had a society that looks after its vulnerable, and we, as a society, pool our tax dollars together for education and for health care.

One of the interesting parts of a letter that I received—from a Conservative, by the way—says, "I pray, people, you will show Mr Eves you don't want what he's selling. Vote against him and the Conservative Party. (It is no longer progressive, as it once was.)" Again, this was signed by a Conservative.

One of the things I have to tell you is that it's unfortunate that we are reducing our social conscience when it comes to why we pay taxes and that we turn them into political gimmicks. One of the issues I find hard to accept is this notion that they can be fiscally responsible—they give back all these taxes, and yet they can make everything better.

According to Standard and Poor's, for anyone who's listening, we're running \$1 billion of deficit, because the only way the government can balance its budget is if it sells \$2.2 billion of assets, assets that they do not know how they're going to sell. But they consistently do not accept responsibility for their own actions. What they do is consistently point fingers at everyone else. They divert attention.

I learned a long time ago that we all have to accept responsibility for our actions. We have a government today that does not accept responsibility for its actions. As a matter of fact, it consistently tries to, I would say, not be clear in how and what it is doing. Sometimes I feel like there's an attempt to fool the public. This bill, in my opinion, is a gimmick only to buy votes.

1740

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): First of all, people have to realize that we're once again dealing with closure here. Every bill, except the one relating to SARS, that has been passed by this Legislature in this current session has been time-allocated. Closure has been invoked. We have to come up with a better system.

When you think of it, years ago time allocation and closure was a major issue. It is shutting off debate. We've got many, many members on this side of the House who want the opportunity to speak on this bill, and that's being denied by probably the strictest closure motion we've had yet. At least some of the other closure motions have had clauses in them to the effect that if there's a call for third reading, there will be a one-hour debate, a day's debate, or the bill will go to committee for a day or two or three or what have you. What is it in

this case? Nothing. There is no other time allocated that offers any discussion on this bill.

The motion simply states that “the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill, without further debate or amendment, at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called on that same day”—which is something new as well. It always used to be that unless there was unanimous consent, a bill was never called for third reading the same day that it was given second reading. That’s a new addition to the closure.

I don’t want to waste my time with that. I just want the people of Ontario to know that this government, the Harris-Eves government, is renowned for having passed in this House, over the last eight years, more closure motions and more time allocation motions than all the other governments that preceded it in the 130-year history of this province. They’re at it again. This time they’re doing it on something where they’re trying to buy the seniors’ votes in the next election. Whether that election is going to come in the fall or next spring, they’re trying to buy the seniors’ votes by saying, “We are going to give you back the education portion of your property taxes.”

Let’s be honest about it: some people may be enticed by it. It’s a very enticing proposition for a senior. What I found very interesting is that you would think that all the senior citizens’ associations across the province would be in favour of it because it’s putting money directly back into seniors’ pockets. Mind you, it goes directly contrary to the whole notion of government and what government should be all about, which is to collect taxes from people so it can then spend them on behalf of the entire community. We’re basically saying to a group of individuals, “You no longer have to pay for the education costs in this province,” and many senior citizens are, in effect, quite disturbed about that.

What will we have next? Will we have 20-year-olds saying, “We don’t use the health care system. Give me a rebate for some of my health care costs”? And how about people who aren’t driving on the highways, who bicycle around on country lanes: “We want to get a rebate on our highway taxes, or whatever portion goes to the highway system in this province, or to the Ministry of Transportation. We shouldn’t have to pay for that”? That is not the kind of society we live in.

Organizations like CARP have it right. CARP, you may recall, is Canada’s Association for the Fifty Plus. They used to be known as the Canadian Association of Retired Persons. What does an organization say that represents over 400,000 Canadians clear across this land? They say, “Tax credits do not benefit low- and fixed-income seniors and in any case do not provide the necessary cash flow to pay for essentials such as rent and food. Let’s not forget the growing number of seniors going to food banks. Why is Queen’s Park ignoring poverty among seniors? Reimbursement for education taxes are welcome, of course, but at what expense to younger Ontarians? And how will renters benefit?”

As a matter of fact, the opening comment on this in the press release that was issued on March 28 of this year says, “Ontario budget 2003 an insult to the intelligence and well-being of seniors.”

Interjections.

Mr Gerretsen: That’s what they say. It’s right here: “an insult to the intelligence and well-being of seniors.” They realize that if you want to do something for the people out there, you’ve got to do it for the people who need help.

Interjection.

Mr Gerretsen: I wonder if you could intervene for a moment, Speaker, or maybe tell the member to quiet down a little bit. I don’t remember him standing up and having the floor.

Hon Ernie Hardeman (Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Did you finish speaking?

Mr Gerretsen: No, I’m not finished by any means. I think what you’re doing here is wrong, and I think in your heart of hearts you know it’s wrong, too.

Interjection.

Mr Gerretsen: Oh yes, you know it. As a matter of fact, you know this quite well. If you’re going to spend \$450 million on behalf of the seniors in this province, then spend it in the areas where it’s needed. Spend the \$250 million on home care—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: I won’t warn the member for Niagara Falls or the member for Oxford again.

The Chair recognizes the member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr Gerretsen: Thank you very much, Speaker, an excellent ruling once again.

Speaker, you well know where the \$450 million is really needed. It’s not for everybody, clear across the board. It isn’t needed by Ted Rogers, so that he can get \$18,000 back, or by Ken Thomson, \$17,000, or Peter Munk, \$17,000, or even one of my childhood heroes, Gordon Lightfoot, \$13,400, or Hal Jackman, the former Lieutenant Governor of this province, \$12,000, or Hilary and Galen Weston, \$13,735. Those folks don’t need it. The people who do need it are the people who need home care, the people who have been totally cut off.

There was a letter sent to the Premier on April 17 by an organization called the Ontario Home and Community Care Round Table. This organization represents about 20 different organizations in the province. They include the Alzheimer Society of Ontario, the Ontario Community Support Association, Communities for Home Health Care, the Ontario Coalition of Senior Citizens Organizations, the Ontario Federation of Labour, the Ontario Health Coalition, the Ontario Home Health Care Providers’ Association, the Retired Teachers of Ontario, the United Senior Citizens of Ontario and the Victorian Order of Nurses.

What do they say to the Premier? “Please have a meeting with us because we are very concerned that you have frozen home and community care funding at the 2001-02 level.” What has it done? I’m not reading from

my propaganda. I'm reading from their letter, their plea to the Premier. They say, "More than 115,000 vulnerable seniors and persons with debilitating diseases have lost services completely." These home care services used to be available to people who needed them. They are no longer available. So what's it going to do? It's going to send those people into institutions at a much faster rate than used to be the case, at probably a much higher expense than if we were to provide them with adequate home care services.

They go on to say, "The number of hours of service has declined by 30%." In other words, for the people who are getting some home care services, their average number of hours has declined by 30%. "Over six million hours of services for homemaking, personal support, nursing and therapy services have been cut out. Community support agencies continue to struggle to meet the increasing demands of an aging population."

That's the plea they made to the Premier, and the Premier could have done the right thing, the thing a Dalton McGuinty government is going to do, and expend \$250 million in that area rather than giving everybody in this province of senior age a tax credit, as has been proposed here.

There is a tax credit system already in existence. We're all aware of it. It works through the income tax system, and basically it benefits those people who really need the help. If you wanted to do anything for the neediest, and I agree there are many seniors living at a subsistence level, why did you not use that system that's already in existence, boost it up, and give it as a benefit to the people who really need it?

I could go on. There's more money needed in the nursing home sector. I think it's an absolute shame and a travesty that according to the government's own study by Price Waterhouse, which was done a couple of years ago, we rank absolutely the lowest of all the 10 jurisdictions they looked at in the number of hours of personal care and nursing services we provide for the 60,000 residents in our nursing homes.

The people who work there work extremely hard. They're overworked. The people who live in those homes need more care than ever before, and yet we can't even provide them now with 2.25 hours of nursing care per day. The government even did away with that regulation. When places like Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, places in Europe, can spend up to three and four hours a day in nursing and personal services, we somehow think it's all right to do with two and a quarter hours or less. That's why we're at the bottom of the totem pole.

What's it going to cost? We have this information from the Ontario Long Term Care Association—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: I won't warn the member from Don Valley East or the member from Ottawa-Carleton again. The Chair recognizes the member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr Gerretsen: Thank you very much, Speaker, again, for an excellent ruling.

What do the Ontario Long Term Care Association and the Ontario non-profit homes association say? They say if we want to increase nursing and personal care standards in nursing homes for the seniors who truly need the services, we need to expend another \$225 million. You put the \$225 million that's needed in the nursing home sector to bring it up to quality standards and you take the \$250 million that's required in the community care sector in this province, and you've got your \$450 million.

I say to the government members, don't try to buy this election by buying the seniors' vote. You're doing the wrong thing. Help those people who really need the help.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Baird has moved government notice of motion number 53. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1752 to 1802.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnett, Ted
Baird, John R.
Barrett, Toby
Beaubien, Marcel
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Brad
Clement, Tony
Coburn, Brian
Cunningham, Dianne
DeFaria, Carl
Ecker, Janet
Elliott, Brenda
Flaherty, Jim
Galt, Doug
Gilchrist, Steve

Gill, Raminder
Guzzo, Garry J.
Hardeman, Ernie
Hudak, Tim
Jackson, Cameron
Johns, Helen
Kells, Morley
Klees, Frank
Martiniuk, Gerry
Maves, Bart
Mazzilli, Frank
McDonald, AL
Miller, Norm
Molinari, Tina R.
Munro, Julia

Mushinski, Marilyn
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Runciman, Robert W.
Sampson, Rob
Spina, Joseph
Sterling, Norman W.
Tascona, Joseph N.
Tsubouchi, David H.
Turnbull, David
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Young, David

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bartolucci, Rick
Bountrogianni, Marie
Boyer, Claudette
Bradley, James J.
Brown, Michael A.
Bryant, Michael
Caplan, David
Churley, Marilyn
Colle, Mike
Conway, Sean G.
Cordiano, Joseph

Curling, Alvin
Di Cocco, Caroline
Duncan, Dwight
Gerretsen, John
Kennedy, Gerard
Kormos, Peter
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Levac, David
Marchese, Rosario
Martel, Shelley

Martin, Tony
McGuinty, Dalton
McMeekin, Ted
Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Prue, Michael
Pupatello, Sandra
Ramsay, David
Ruprecht, Tony
Smitherman, George

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 44; the nays are 32.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It being well after 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1805.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr
Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers
Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller
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Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
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Bramalea-Gore-Malton- Springdale	Gill, Raminder (PC)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Marie (L)
Brampton Centre / -Centre	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Christopherson, David (ND)
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Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Huron-Bruce	Johns, Hon / L'hon Helen (PC) Minister of Agriculture and Food / ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation
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Burlington	Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
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Eglinton-Lawrence	Colle, Mike (L)	London-Fanshawe	Mazzilli, Frank (PC)
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Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L)		
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Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)		
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)		
Guelph-Wellington	Elliott, Hon / L'hon Brenda (PC) Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services / ministre des Services à la collectivité, à la famille et à l'enfance		

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
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Mississauga South / -Sud	Marland, Margaret (PC)	Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)
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Niagara Centre / -Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Alvin (L)
Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)	Simcoe North / -Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)
Nipissing	McDonald, AL (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
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Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / -Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Ottawa-Vanier	Boyer, Claudette (Ind)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Ramsay, David (L)
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Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Windsor West / -Ouest	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
Sault Ste Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)	Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Dwight (L)
		York Centre / -Centre	Kwinter, Monte (L)
		York North / -Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)
		Mississauga West / -Ouest	Vacant

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Raminder Gill, Pat Hoy, Morley Kells, Rosario Marchese, Ted
McMeekin, Bill Murdoch, Wayne Wettlaufer
Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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of Ontario**

Fourth Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Quatrième session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 12 June 2003

Jeudi 12 juin 2003

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 12 June 2003

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

PREVENTING PARTISAN ADVERTISING ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 VISANT À EMPÊCHER LA PUBLICITÉ À CARACTÈRE POLITIQUE

Mr Bradley moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 91, An Act to end government spending on partisan advertising / Projet de loi 91, Loi mettant fin aux dépenses du gouvernement en matière de publicité à caractère politique.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): The member for St Catharines has up to 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): It would be an understatement to say that I have been somewhat obsessed with the issue of government advertising for a number of years, and there's a very good reason for that. I happen to believe that partisan, self-congratulatory advertising by any government is not a justified use of taxpayers' dollars.

What I am particularly offended by—and I think the public is—is not the pamphlet the minister has in his or her office or some of the publications that go out to a few people. I've noticed in various ministries of economic development over the years that there have been some things with nine pictures of the minister and so on; I'm not talking about those. What I'm talking about is the virtual barrage of advertising on television. We're hearing it on radio stations. We're seeing it in newspapers, in full-page ads in some cases. We're seeing it in magazines. We're getting pamphlets of this kind—I don't want to use a prop, but various kinds of pamphlets that show up at our houses. There are the road signs I look at, which say, "Building Ontario Together: Ernie Eves, Premier." Even where there's no construction work going on, there are huge, expensive road signs.

I think it's an abuse for governments to do this, an abuse of public office. I think it's an abuse of the taxpayers. It's particularly galling, I guess, to those of us on this side when we look at a government that was elected to save taxpayers money. That was one of the thrusts this government had. Both Premier Harris, when he was

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 12 juin 2003

Premier, and certainly Premier Eves have said, "We're here to save money for the people of the province." So I think it's particularly galling, as the taxpayers' federation mentioned, when it's a government that was elected with that particular mantra.

I noticed several kinds of advertising. First of all, television: it's clear it's an expensive buy. The government puts it on where it's going to be seen the most, around newscasts. They must have been deeply saddened that the Toronto Maple Leafs did not make it to the second or third round of the playoffs or to the finals, because we would have seen them during that period of time; no doubt about it.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation): And other reasons.

Mr Bradley: And other reasons.

There are the health care ads, one spreading what I would call inaccurate information about how many nurses have been hired in the province, and another about the government's efforts to recruit doctors and other professionals. They're all using strategic messaging about how the government is, as they would say, making health care work for you.

Education: they have one that touts, in what I would say again is an inaccurate fashion, student testing results. Another promotes the government's teacher testing requirements, and another torques the government's allocation of funds for special-needs children, all using the strategic message, again, of helping kids learn.

The opportunity bonds, which I think are reasonable to sell in this province, and the regular savings bonds, tout the government's supposed job creation record and international reputation rather than the actual bonds themselves.

SARS: the 30-second TV ads running in border states and beamed into Ontario, featuring our own Premier Eves, at a cost of over \$1 million. The West Nile virus ads—I want to say this because there is a reason for providing information. Again, with the permission of the members of the Legislature, and even without it, I'm going to hold up an ad here. The reason I'm going to is that I think it's a good ad. This is an ad that talks about, "Ontario health update on severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS): make your family aware." It is straight information. You know at the bottom where the government always puts, "Making health care work for you"? They don't have that. This is what I call reasonable information provided to the public of Ontario.

I noticed that in the radio ads, once the government thought it had SARS licked, they started to say, "Here's

what your government is doing," and the same thing with West Nile virus. It's quite legitimate for the government to say what people should do out there: to give the caution and provide the information. But on every occasion, this government—and it's not necessarily the members of the Legislature; it's the whiz kids in the backrooms who say, "This is what you're supposed to do."

The government has spent, they admit, over \$401 million on government advertising. I'm not even quarrelling with that, because I think that in this particular year, with the special emergency circumstances, there is a legitimate buy to be made. What I'm objecting to is the nature of the media-wide advertising that I see in the province.

I'm rather interested in the fact that we have these householders, we have newspaper ads, we have the glossy inserts—I think everybody remembers the very glossy 30-page insert about SuperBuild in Maclean's magazine. All it was, again, was a self-congratulatory message to the people of this province, which I think annoyed a lot of people. That money could be better used for programs such as health care, education, the environment and other areas of the province of Ontario than squandering it on self-congratulatory partisan advertising.

1010

I've brought forward a bill which establishes standards for government advertising, including that it be in the public interest and that it be non-partisan. A member of cabinet may ask the Provincial Auditor of Ontario to decide if specified government advertising meets the standards before the advertising is made public. A member of the assembly may make a complaint to the auditor that specified government advertising does not meet the standards. If the auditor decides after a complaint that specified government advertising does not meet the specified standards, the governing party may be ordered to reimburse the crown for the costs of the advertising. The bill requires the auditor to report annually to the Speaker of the assembly on government advertising.

I can't be objective in this, nor can members of the government, but I think the office of the auditor can. Our own auditor has expressed his concerns about this in years gone by in the auditor's report. The Speakers of the assembly have expressed their concern about it. I think we, as an assembly, have a chance to end this nonsense once and for all.

This is not coming from a fringe party that has no seats in the Legislature and no chance of ever forming a government. This is coming from—and I'm sure it will be supported by the New Democratic Party—one of the three parties in the Legislature that have a chance to form a government in the next election, whether they choose a Conservative, Liberal or NDP government. We are people who have a chance to form the government, so you might say it is in our interest, politically, not to bring forward a bill of this kind.

I feel so strongly about it and leader Dalton McGuinty does because he's had a very similar bill before the

House that we should end this. It should be put outside, as it is in Britain—there's an objective observer in Britain who vets the advertising and makes decisions on it. I saw a CBC program a couple of years ago. I think it showed Ontario government ads. The person who was reviewing the ads in Britain said these would never pass in Britain because they were clearly ads which were there to promote the government.

Even when the government is advertising in the United States, they advertise on border stations. The message is, "Invest in Ontario." Is that a reasonable message? Yes, it is. But it's funny that it's not a message that's going into Kentucky or Arkansas or Texas. It's a message which is in the border states, immediately adjacent to Ontario, so that people in Ontario will see the ads and it will make them feel good about the province of Ontario.

In my view, I agree with the many editorials out there. The Owen Sound Times says: "Can we get some stricter controls on government advertising—or as it should be called—propaganda ... Currently the Tories are in power, they're behind in the polls and an election is looming. We're therefore being treated to a barrage of government TV ads telling us how great Ontario's doing."

The St Catharines Standard: "This is not a necessary document; it doesn't tell taxpayers how to utilize a particular aspect of the SuperBuild process, its primary purpose isn't to provide access to information for Ontarians who may require the services and there is no emergency or particular urgency that requires the dissemination of this information. The overwhelming message is, 'Here's what the magnanimous government of Ernie Eves has done for you.' And the Ontario Conservatives are putting out this message not at their own expense, but at the expense of taxpayers."

Now, if the government wishes to, it has a lot of people who work for it and its communications. If the Premier or any minister or any member wants to call a press conference every day and provide information to the news media, I don't object to that. That's part of the process.

If the government party, the Progressive Conservative Party at this time, wishes to spend money from its funds to advertise in a partisan sense, that's quite legitimate in our system. I think what we have to do, though, is end this abuse of the taxpayers of this province. The government will now not even provide the cost of the advertising when they are requested to give those costs to the people of this province. They no longer want to provide that. Again, I go back to the fact that most observers who are objective in this look not at the volume of advertising; what they look at is the content. Clearly it's unacceptable. This bill will change that.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): New Democrats support this bill. In fact, it's consistent with similar bills that have been presented by the New Democratic Party and it's consistent with our serious concern about the escalating abuse by this government of its access to consolidated revenues, to taxpayers' dollars, and the

utilization of huge amounts of taxpayer dollars, the exact amount of which cannot be determined—that's one of the problems—to engage in partisan self-promotion.

Mr Bradley suggests it's fine if the governing political party uses monies out of its political party coffers to pay for advertising. One can't object to that, yet one understands why this government feels all the more compelled to use taxpayers' money, because obviously it's using tax-receipted, taxpayer-subsidized political donations to send its cabinet ministers and their families on luxurious European vacations, leaving precious little for partisan advertising. Hence this government's eagerness to dip its hands, elbows, shoulders, deep into the taxpayers' funding to engage in partisan advertising.

One of the interesting things as well about this bill is that the auditor may elect to proceed when conducting an inquiry as if he were operating under parts I and II of the Public Inquiries Act. That's an important consideration. I would have hoped that it would have included part III, for the one obvious reason that it would include the power to search and seize. When this bill goes to committee, I will be calling upon Mr Bradley to consider supporting an amendment to the bill that would include the utilization of part III. Because we know that this government can be oh-so-cagey—has been oh-so-cagey—and clandestine and secretive about burying any number of costs, including the costs of partisan advertising, burying them deeply—the same way Mr Stockwell tried to bury the taxpayer-subsidized funding of his vacation in the most expensive of European capitals: Rome, Paris, London, Glasgow, in five-star accommodations. Stockwell, on the taxpayers' tab, gave the Michelin guide a workout; no two ways about it.

Others pale in comparison. Brad Clark, the Minister of Labour: his riding association buys him a suit with taxpayer-funded dollars.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): What kind of suits, Peter?

Mr Kormos: It was \$699, all in, tax included.

Mr Bisson: For what?

Mr Kormos: I don't know. Where I come from, I thought you could get two or three suits for \$699, all in, tax included. But as it was, Mr Clark used taxpayers' money to buy himself a tuxedo. Fair enough, I suppose, if one wants a tuxedo, if one thinks that a tuxedo complements one's presence.

Mr Bisson: Doesn't he make enough?

Mr Kormos: The guy is into a six-digit income, and where I come from people buy their own clothes with their own money. Quite frankly, if they can't afford to buy a tuxedo, they do without; they wear a dark blue suit, which, believe it or not, I've borrowed on occasion to wear at events that would otherwise call for so-called black tie.

Why do governments do this? Why do governments dip their hands into the cookie jar? Why do cabinet ministers do it? They do it because they can. They do it because there's a regal sense of entitlement that develops, where there's an emperor-like perspective of the world

acquired, "It's ours and we can do with it as we wish." What this bill does is (1) permit scrutiny, and (2) provide a modest disincentive because the auditor has the power to compel the governing party to pick up the tab, should the auditor find that the partisan advertising was indeed that—partisan.

1020

We've seen the abuse of power, though, in so many other ways other than just the actual taxpayer expenditure. I was shocked at a recent press conference by the emperor—rather, the Premier—Eves, wherein he was making what was purported to be a substantive announcement. When Ms Churley and I arrived at the venue where the announcement was being made, the Sergeant at Arms was sent in, in an effort to escort us out. I found that bizarre. Thank goodness Ms Churley was there—

Mr Bisson: She protected you.

Mr Kormos: —and protected me from being seized physically by anybody. God bless her. She's small, but she's tough. She does indeed roar. But no, we stood our ground. What that invited, though, was a very angry person, who I was told was one Deb Hutton. I understand she lives down in Wainfleet at least some of the time, and I've met her from time to time at public events with that fellow she's married to. Ms Hutton came down, angrily stomping, and although I know it's physically impossible, I was sure I could see smoke rising from each side of her head. But she kept a careful watch on the potentially subversive Churley-Kormos team.

But again, it's that sense of, "Why do we do it? Because we can." We've seen that from this government as it gets more and more desperate and as it advances more and more desperate policies and legislative initiatives, utilizing the airwaves. Our blue boxes—my goodness, what they've done to the blue box industry is remarkable in and of its own right because, again, on my street, down on Bald Street in Welland, people can identify this stuff pretty rapidly. It fills the blue boxes to overflowing in relatively short order. But that simply is an observation about the volume and the incredible cost to the taxpayer.

This government hasn't got the dignity or any sufficient sense of restraint to control itself. It's not the first government to engage in advertising, but certainly, coming from me as a 15-year person here now, and certainly reinforced by others who have been here much longer, we've never seen as thorough and as expensive and as costly and as voluminous a program of partisan advertising by any government as this government, all on the taxpayer tab.

Mr Bisson wants to speak to this bill. I'm looking forward to his comments, as are other members, I'm sure. Marilyn Churley noted earlier today that she finally understands now how it is that it's Tory members who get identified as the best-dressed members in those whimsical columns at the end of the year. Of course it's Tory members who are always identified as the best dressed; it's the Tory members who are having their riding associations use taxpayer-subsidized funds to pick

up their tailoring and clothing tabs. If you doubt me, take a look at the records filed over there in the library. Take a look at all 103 of them and take a look at which of the piggies have their snouts ear-deep in the trough. It's the Tory piggies at the trough. It's the Tory piggies in there ear-deep, gobbling away at taxpayer dollars.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm certainly pleased to join in the debate with respect to the bill from the member from St Catharines. I guess I would comment quite frankly that this is obviously a partisan bill. He's concerned about the government message that's getting to the people, and that people understand it.

He sets out standards in his bill with respect to what he thinks are the standards. He states that "Government advertising shall meet the following standards:

"1. The advertising must be a reasonable means to achieve one or more of the following purposes:

"i. To inform the public of services available to them.

"ii. To inform the public of their rights and responsibilities under the law.

"iii. To encourage or discourage specific social behaviour in the public interest."

That's what's been happening. That's what the public has a right to know. The public has a right to know what their government is doing.

This bill, in essence, is trying to stifle democracy with respect to providing information on government programs to the public. I note what he's doing here. When the NDP and the Liberals were in the government, they did the same type of advertising that he's complaining about, and they also spent more money than this government has ever spent on government advertising.

But the one area he doesn't go to—and I know he doesn't want to go there because he doesn't want to bring his federal Liberal cousins into this—is that the Auditor General recently talked about the federal Liberals with respect to—I don't worry about their advertising. The Auditor General said the cronyism in the federal government advertising has never reached such a level. Let's get this thing clear in terms of what we're dealing with here. At the federal level, the problem is that the Auditor General believes that all there is is cronyism in terms of how they do their advertising.

What the provincial Liberals have a problem with is, "What are you doing speaking to the public about government programs and information? Why are you doing that?" Mr Bradley sets out, in essence, an auditor's court of litigation. That's essentially what it is. I would say to you that a better use of resources and the auditor's time would be not putting in place what we're talking about here. He's got it set up whereby the cabinet member would go the Provincial Auditor and say, "Is this all right, Mr Provincial Auditor?" The Provincial Auditor already looks at government spending. That's that person's job, and I've never seen a complaint from the Auditor General that he hasn't been able to do his job.

There are other processes here, since I've been here, in terms of how you deal with government messaging. You

can deal with that through the Integrity Commissioner; it has been used before. I sit on the Legislative Assembly committee. We deal with members' actions and proper conduct. I can tell you, those committees have been used. The Integrity Commissioner has been used in a situation where you're dealing with government advertising that was prematurely sent out and the language was not properly set forth. I stood on that committee and I dealt with that particular piece of legislation and the minister who was responsible for it. That process is still in place.

What we have here is partisan legislation designed to stifle the government message with respect to telling people about program information. It meets the standards on his own test. I guess what he doesn't like is looking at other people's pictures. I think they used to look at his picture when he was the Minister of the Environment. There weren't any complaints then, but perhaps times have changed.

I see no need for this bill. The auditor is perfectly capable of reviewing whatever material he sees fit. I know that he has done an admirable job of this in the past, and I'm sure he will continue to do that. I have no doubts about that. I'm surprised to see that the Liberals continue to have such little regard for the auditor than to think he needs to be told how to look at this, where to look at it, and here's how you're supposed to deal with this. What they're putting in here is their own subjective views on this. That's strictly what the member has put forth.

I'm grateful for my colleague having brought up these important issues before, and I want to look at some of the other weaknesses of the bill, because it's fraught with weaknesses.

Let me start with the issue of resources. The bill would require the auditor to review all advertising at one point or another. Whether it is reviewed prior to the release at the request of the government, whether it is required as a result of a complaint, or whether it is reviewed as a result of the year-end requirement, this is a huge undertaking. The auditor would be required to look at every notice a ministry posts in which it advertises a job, every posting that gives a notice of an environmental assessment, every notice of public hearings. It would have to review every single public health announcement, including those ads that have been posted dealing with SARS and the West Nile virus. I take it that the member didn't have any problem with the West Nile virus advertisement.

1030

This would be a tremendous new workload for the auditor and would make the auditor's office litigious. The auditor's office is a review agency; it's not a litigation office. That's what he's trying to turn it into. The problem here, of course, is the fact that the member opposite has given absolutely no consideration to where the auditor would obtain these extra resources or how they would be employed in this new process. If he has, there is no evidence of that in the bill. This is particularly disturbing in relation to these new, unprecedented duties.

There is no thought about how the auditor would evaluate compliance, which is especially troubling, given that this is not traditionally an area that the auditor would look at in detail.

This is really not surprising. The Liberals are always happy to criticize but do not put forward any good ideas about how it would happen. They're perfectly happy to let someone else do the work, as long as they get the credit; happy to put it forward and let someone else figure out the details. Well, the devil is in the details, and the details here cause some serious problems.

We, on this side of the House, have to be concerned about these details. It is incumbent upon the government to think about how this would really work and consider the real-life consequences of policy. We can't afford the luxury of pie-in-the-sky ideas that create new problems and accomplish nothing.

Let me also for a moment talk about something that really bothers me when the Liberals put forward things like this: the sheer hypocrisy of the policy. I'm getting close to the end of my time, and I think the member for Northumberland is seeking that time. But I would say I think this is a very subjective view by the member with respect to government information. That information has to be given to the public so that they know what the government is doing, what their rights are and, in fact, to make sure that we deal with people protecting themselves from, for example, the West Nile virus. What's wrong with that?

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'm pleased to support my colleague's bill. I would just start by saying that the public are not fools. They see millions and millions of their dollars, hard-earned tax dollars, being spent in a blatant attempt to get the government re-elected. They're not foolish. They see these things—and they know they cost big money—flowing into their homes, on TV, on the radio, and it's all paid for with their money in a blatant attempt to get the government re-elected.

The member who just spoke made some comments about the Provincial Auditor. The Provincial Auditor has asked us to give him this responsibility. In his annual report, he pointed out the problems with this, pointed out the abuse that goes on with the government deciding it's going to spend taxpayers' dollars to attempt to get themselves re-elected, when the taxpayers' dollars should be used to do the things that are spelled out in Mr Bradley's bill. The member may not be aware, or someone may not have told him. Whoever wrote those notes for him conveniently made him look a little foolish, because the Provincial Auditor himself has asked for these sorts of powers.

I would say that \$400 million of taxpayers' money may not seem like much to Mr Eves, but for the taxpayers, \$400 million of their money spent on advertising, in many cases in a blatantly partisan way, and frankly some of it not particularly straightforward. The advertising council looked at the education report and said, "Listen, it's not factual. It's misleading. You're

going to have to correct it." That's not the opposition speaking; that's an independent body that looks at accuracy in advertising.

There's this pattern: an election coming up and suddenly the taxpayers see their money being spent in a blatant attempt to get the government re-elected. We're going to see that again in July, August and September.

The bill will be passed very shortly here in the House for the seniors' tax credit. The administration of that is going to cost \$15 million a year. Why? There were two ways the government could have done this that would have cost no money. It could have simply said to seniors, "Don't pay your education property tax; you're exempt from it now." That would have cost nothing. The other way would be to make it part of the income tax return; simply change the income tax return. That would have cost nothing. But the government chose another way, and they're going to spend \$15 million of your money to administer it. Each senior will now have to apply for the refund, fill out a big application form and mail it in. Then there are going to have to be a million of these applications screened and a cheque mailed back. The cost of that, according to the government, is \$15 million.

Why is that? Why are we spending \$15 million of taxpayers' money? It's for one simple reason: so that in July and August, leading up to the election, Ernie Eves will run advertisements saying, "Fill in this application and I'll send you back a cheque"—a blatant use of taxpayers' money to try to buy the election. If they wanted to go ahead with the seniors' tax credit, it could have been done at no cost by simply saying, "You don't have to pay your education property tax. Just don't send that in, because you are now exempt from it." Or they could have said, "When you fill in your income tax form, you will be getting a tax credit." Those two things would have cost nothing, but this one, \$15 million.

I guarantee you—the government said, "We're going to be advertising this." I can hear it now—taxpayers' dollars—saying, "Fill in this application, and Ernie Eves will send you a cheque." Of course it's all taxpayers' money, but he'll send a cheque and he thinks that will buy him the election. So it's just a series of abuses.

I was quite resentful, I must say—there was an advertisement thanking the health care workers for their tremendous work on SARS. All of us in this Legislature, and everybody in Ontario, owe a debt of thanks to them, but it says, "The Ernie Eves government thanks you." I really found that offensive. I think it should have said, "On behalf of the government of Ontario," but to try to get a partisan advantage in something as serious as this, I found offensive.

I support my colleague's bill. I think it's sensible, reasonable and something the Provincial Auditor has been asking for.

Mr Bisson: I was really interested in the response from the Conservative members in regard to this bill. For the Conservative members to stand in this House and say, "We can't pass this bill because the auditor doesn't have the resources to properly monitor this bill and make it

work," I think is really an unbelievable statement on the part of this government.

I sit on the Board of Internal Economy, and when the auditor came forward to the members of the board asking for an increase in his budget to deal with issues such as this, so that he could properly do his job, he got turned down flat. He was turned down flat to be given the resources by this government for him to audit the books. What was even more galling was that the government board members didn't even have the courtesy—and I think he should have been given the courtesy—to have the auditor come before the Board of Internal Economy.

This government on the one hand is trying to limit the role of the auditor by not properly financing him, and then comes in here and says, "We can't pass this bill because he's not properly resourced." You're talking out of both sides of your mouth, and quite frankly I think it's somewhat hypocritical—not somewhat; I think it is. Sorry; that's unparliamentary, and I take that back. I would just say it is a bit beyond the pale.

I want to bring this to the beginning. Do people remember what they did to members' budgets and caucus budgets in 1995 when Mike Harris got elected? Prior to 1995, a member of this assembly, no matter where they sat in this assembly, be it in opposition or in government, had the ability to communicate with his or her constituents through three householders per year. In other words, every member was able to write up a piece that was non-partisan, that talked about what was going on in the constituency and what was happening at Queen's Park and send to every household three householders per year. In addition to that, members and caucuses had the ability to mail out, I think, 7,000 or 7,500 letters per week if they chose, and some members chose to do that, in order to keep their constituents up to date.

For Toronto members, I think that's important, because it's hard for Toronto members to get into the big media. If they're going to communicate with their constituents, urban members especially need to have that type of ability to communicate directly with their voters. The same thing goes for people like me. I've got a riding that goes from Hudson Bay down to Timmins. In some parts of my riding, people really don't get the news. The paper ain't delivered there. So it's important to be able to send mail out to your constituents and say, "This year we're dealing with this particular issue in the session; if you would like to make comment at committee or whatever"—you can communicate with your constituents.

1040

This government took all that funding away. This is what I find so hypocritical—oh, I can't say that; it's unparliamentary, and I withdraw again. But I find it somewhat difficult that the government on one hand is spending record amounts of money to communicate with voters in an attempt to prop themselves up to get elected, but the first thing they did when they got elected was slash—they didn't slash; they eliminated—all budgets that members and caucuses had to be able to mail to their constituents. I just say, what a double standard. And I

think it was very calculated; I think the government knew exactly what it was doing.

It said, "If we can eliminate the ability of the opposition to communicate with their constituents, if we can eliminate the opportunity for caucuses to communicate information to voters across the province in government members' ridings by way of mailings that our caucuses are able to do, we're going to take away an opposition voice." It would allow the Conservatives to flood the market with government advertising, and there's nothing the opposition parties can do.

I think this government has really taken partisanship in this Legislature to an extreme, to an actual extreme. What you've got is a government that has all the resources of government and uses them to all their entitlement. They fly the private plane around, they go to everybody's riding—they're always trying to go out there to prop themselves up—they communicate by way of government advertising and they took away the ability of opposition members to even mail into their own ridings. I say, what a bunch; that's really big of you. I think it was very calculated.

I look forward to a change of government—that at least we get a minority Parliament—and we're able to come back to this Legislature and put some fairness back into the system. We need to have the type of legislation Mr Bradley talks about, because quite frankly it is tempting for governments to abuse their power by way of advertising, no matter what their stripe is. We should make sure, by way of a process such as legislation like this, that governments are limited in what they can advertise about, so that they are truly advertising information that is not partisan in nature. Second, if caucuses and members have to communicate with the greater electorate across the province and in their ridings, there should be budgets for that which everybody has access to. So if Ernie Eves and his caucus want to send out a report card on what they've done, do it through your caucus budget and let the opposition parties do the same.

I want to thank the member for St Catharines for raising this issue. I don't think the government is going to support it at the end, because they like the one-way street they've created. They like the idea that they are the only ones who are able to advertise and basically stifle the opposition. I think that just shows how big this government really is. They're, like, really big.

Hon Doug Galt (Minister without Portfolio): Just before I get off to speaking on this topic the member for St Catharines has put forward, I invite the members in the Legislature today to join me in welcoming, in both galleries, students from MacLeod Public School in Sudbury.

I was a little excited when I saw that the member for St Catharines was going to come forward with a private member's bill. Knowing that he's not very often partisan, I figured it would be a really good bill, and I'm disappointed. I'm extremely disappointed. Mr Bradley is such a great orator in these hallowed halls, and I thought he'd be coming forward with a bill that had some sub-

stance in it. But in fact, it's a wedge issue. It's partisan politics at its worst. Maybe I was expecting too much from the member for St Catharines, who is a friend I hold in great respect, but he really disappointed me on this one.

I think of the spending that's been going on in advertising, promoting and letting people know about government programs. I look at what happened when they were in government in the late 1980s—some \$20 million more than we have spent, if you adjust that according to inflation; the NDP spent some \$10 million more.

One of the criticisms I hear of our government is that we don't let them know enough about the programs our government has. You will recall, I'm sure, that back about two months ago we did some consultations in Ontario prior to the throne speech. It was interesting that about half of the suggestions I was hearing had already been implemented by our government, but the very kind people who came out to assist with those consultations were unaware of it. This comes around to the importance of informing the public about what government is doing and the programs that are available to them.

I can also relate to you the recent consultations I did with the plastics industry, a very delightful, enjoyable three weeks last summer that we spent on the road visiting the plastics industry. One of the things that came out was that they were unaware of government programs. When we released the report recently, we had an appendix in it that indicated the various programs, both provincial and federal, that were available. I'm sure that will be helpful to the plastics industry.

I think it was unfortunate that the member from Scarborough-Agincourt was speaking about the auditor's report and doing follow-up on it. That's exactly what we've done. The auditor came out and he spoke, and in 2001 we implemented those directives. If the member from Scarborough-Agincourt would have a look at that, he would see that we are doing exactly as the auditor requested—an auditor whom I believe their government appointed. I'm not absolutely sure on that, but I think that happened.

I think this new policy gives the guidance and direction that's necessary. Certainly we have been following the direction that has come forward as a result of the concerns expressed by the auditor, not only about our government but also about previous governments and how they were using taxpayers' dollars to inform the public about various programs.

My apologies to the member from St Catharines when I say this, but I see that his bill is actually an insult to the auditor. I think the auditor is going to be a little perturbed, just a little upset at the content of this bill. If he had gone to the auditor and maybe worked with the auditor, he might have come up with a pretty good bill, but I don't think he did. It's a weak bill. The content in it is certainly not putting forward the kind of information that's in the directives Management Board now has as it relates to advertising the various government programs we have here in Ontario.

I'm also concerned with the content of the bill in that it's going to create a tremendous amount of red tape, which I think is really very unnecessary. It's going to create red tape as it relates to filling job vacancies. It's going to create red tape as it relates to letting the public know about conditions like SARS, about conditions like the West Nile virus and the concerns there. The member from St Catharines held up an advertisement about SARS, providing information to the public. I don't think he would want that information held up because of having to go through the kind of red tape he is suggesting in this bill.

With all due respect, I would suggest he just stand up in the House in his last two minutes and withdraw the bill. It would save embarrassment to himself and to his party, particularly as to what they did when they were in government back in the late 1980s, over 10 years ago. That, by the way, was part of the lost decade in Ontario. That's when the debt skyrocketed, when deficits took off, when budgets were never balanced, even though they tried to indicate one year that the budget was balanced. Certainly when Bob Rae came along he laughed at it and said he wanted to be Premier in the worst way, and that's exactly the way he received government—in the worst possible way. That's just a bit of a quote, my words, but essentially it's what Bob Rae said in this Legislature and on the street; that was the way he found that government.

I look at this bill. I compliment the member from St Catharines for thinking about this kind of thing and being concerned about it for the sake of the taxpayers, although when he was Minister of the Environment back in the late 1980s, obviously he was not that concerned as it related to the taxpayers of the day and the kind of red tape that was involved in the environment. It was totally unnecessary. I spent some four years trying to get rid of that.

Coming back to the bill, I suggest the member stand up and withdraw it. It would save embarrassment to both him and the Liberal Party of Ontario.

1050

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): Although I can't agree with everything the members on the government side said, I do have to agree with the comment that this government does a lot of things they don't tell the people about. I understand and fully support that. Thank goodness there's an opposition that does tell the public what the government is doing.

About \$400 million has been spent by this government. It was very clearly partisan advertising. We need to remember that it's borrowed money. This government increased the debt by \$21 billion, and part of that debt-borrowing was to pay for these ads. So the debt was increased, although that wasn't mentioned in the partisan ads, and the rest of the province has to pay for it. Four hundred million dollars is a lot of money. It's a little difficult to comprehend what that is.

Let's think about where that money came from to pay for those ads. It came from affordable housing. In my community, I hear today that there are over 700 people

on the waiting list for affordable housing. The money for these ads has come from nurses. In my community, with Quinte Healthcare, they are laying off nurses. In spite of the rhetoric, they're laying off nurses. There is a \$4.4-million budget shortfall for Quinte Health Care. We have no money for the nurses, but we have \$400 million for partisan ads. The monies come from these nurses who are losing their jobs.

The money for these ads has come from ODSP recipients who have had no increase since 1992. There's money for ads, folks, but there's no money for people who are living \$7,000 to \$8,000 below the level of poverty. The simple little cost-of-living increase, which the government has consistently voted against, a little 2% or 3% increase has been opposed because the money is needed for the ads. You should be ashamed of yourselves. For people on ODSP who try to get a job to supplement, because they're \$8,000 below the poverty level, this government claws it back. It claws back any money from the federal government; it claws back any child care benefit; it claws back 75% of what they make over \$235 for a family because they need the money for their partisan purposes.

Ironically, the money for these ads has come from the schools in our system. The system for funding special education in Ontario is a disgrace. There has been no money for special-needs kids, but there's money to run partisan ads telling the people how good the special education system is. If it worked and it worked well, you wouldn't need to advertise. People would know. Money for these ads has come by taking what this government considers frill programs out of schools, things like music and things like late buses that allow rural students to have full access to clubs and sports and extra help. School-children in this province have had to pay for these partisan ads.

There are cutbacks to access centres, where we have seniors having to leave their homes—think about it—to give up their independence and move into an institution because there's no money for access centres, but there's been \$400 million for ads telling what a great job you're doing. You wouldn't have to do that. Just do a good job. Give it a try, give it a shot in your waning months and see if the people are not more impressed than by running ads telling them.

On a funding basis, post-secondary education in this province continues to linger right near the bottom for all of North America. It used to be that if you were intelligent and worked hard, you went to college or university. Now you need to be intelligent, work hard and have a rich family. What a disgrace when we think about the talent that exists out there that's not going to happen.

People in Ontario are not stupid. They work extremely hard for their money, and to see it squandered by a government that is, in a sense, a party that's on government welfare, using government money—maybe what we need is a snitch line. You were saying it's difficult to monitor if the ads are partisan or not. Set up a telephone number. You'll get calls from people who see the 30-

page insert in Maclean's magazine. They know what that 30-page insert cost. And just in case you don't get Maclean's, you mailed it out to every house anyway. What a disgraceful use of money that was earned the hard way by so many taxpayers. Your ads have been funded on the backs of some of the most vulnerable people. You should be ashamed of yourselves.

I heartily support this bill from the member for St Catharines.

Mr Bradley: I appreciate very much the supportive remarks I have received from this side of the House. I have a difficult time taking seriously the objections raised on the other side. It appears that someone in the government backrooms, the "whiz kids," as I call them, have made a decision that the government will not support this. We're not going to see a genuinely free vote, as I was hoping for in the House on this issue. We will likely see the government try to defeat a bill, which I think most people in Ontario, in fact overwhelmingly, would want to see.

I want to quote from an individual in this House who used to sit in your chair. He was making a ruling at the time and said this about government advertising:

"At this point in my ruling, I want to express some personal concerns about the propriety of public funds being used to advocate, through advertising, a particular position on a matter that is before the House. Let me be clear: I am not speaking here about politically paid-for advertising, but rather about funds that are contributed to by every Ontarian, regardless of his or her political view. Personally, I would find it offensive if taxpayer dollars were being used to convey a political or partisan message. There is nothing wrong with members debating an issue and influencing public opinion; in fact, it is part of our parliamentary tradition to do so. But I feel that it's wrong for a government to attempt to influence public opinion through advertising that is paid for with public funds."

That was the Honourable Chris Stockwell, before he was in cabinet, as an impartial Speaker of the Legislature. I agreed with him then. I hope that he would have the same point of view now and would try to prevail upon his colleagues in government to vote for this bill.

It has to be taken out of the hands of those of us who are partisans, as I said, in a reasonable fashion. My interpretation of advertising by government members is going to be different. I think we need somebody impartial. The Provincial Auditor has indicated in his reports that something has to be done. The government did come up with some guidelines. Unfortunately, with the guidelines they don't live up to them. Ask any member of the public to apply these guidelines to what they've seen on television, heard on radio, seen in Maclean's magazine or other magazines, seen in newspapers or see on highway signs or pamphlets that are sent out.

It says that "material should be presented in unbiased and objective language, and in a manner free from partisan promotion of government policy and political argument."

It says that material should not be liable to be misinterpreted as "partisan political." Information campaigns should not intentionally promote or be perceived as promoting political party interests. Communications may be perceived as being partisan political because of any of the following factors.

So it talks about it. Material should be presented in an objective and fair manner. Information campaigns should be directed at the provision of objective, factual and explanatory information. It should be presented in an unbiased and equitable manner. Information should be based on accurate, verifiable facts, carefully and precisely expressed in conformity with those facts.

I don't think any person who has an objective viewpoint, applying that to the government advertising, would conclude that the government was even following its own weak guidelines at this time. We need an enforcement mechanism. That enforcement mechanism can be provided by the Provincial Auditor, who is neutral in these matters.

Ads of this kind will pass because this is an inappropriate use of taxpayers' dollars to provide direct information. Subsequent to this, the government is now telling everybody what a great job they're doing and then adding some information. But this kind of ad is exactly what governments should be providing. They should not be providing the kind of advertising that, as Advertising Standards Canada ruled on May 12, the government violated the Canadian code of advertising standards in an ad which lauds the Conservatives for investing \$250 million more this year in special education, as recommended last December in a report on education financing. Advertising Standards Canada was objective and said, "Look, this ad is inaccurate, providing inaccurate information."

1100

John Williamson of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation said, "I think the opposition is absolutely right ... the government would be well advised to announce an end to these kinds of practices. If they want to get a message out they ought to do it through the political organs, not through the tax-funded system, which is available to them but appears to be being abused."

My final concluding remarks on this: look, I have a list of editorials. This is something pretty hard to find. I was surprised to see the number of editorials being critical of this government. The reason I am is, remember, the newspapers, the television stations, the radio stations, the print companies, but particularly the mass media, make money from this advertising. When they are prepared to be critical of you, even though they are making the money from it, that tells me that they see what you're doing as being wrong.

I think most people in Ontario would think the bill that's being put forward—it's a bill that's based upon a previous bill from Dalton McGuinty, the leader of the official opposition, that says, "Look, if the Liberal Party happens to be elected, chosen by the people after the next election, we're prepared to live by this legislation." We also think it should be applied to any other party that is

elected to be the government of Ontario. That's the choice of the people of this province.

So we have the auditor, we have a Speaker, we have the advertising council. I've heard people say to me that it is cheating in an election campaign if governments are allowed to do this, because they are using taxpayers' resources that are not available to the other political parties to do this. I don't even want to say it's something that only a Conservative government has ever done. I have seen it in my years in this Legislature. I think it's time to bring it to an end. This government is approaching an election. We see ads that are clearly partisan advocating government policies, patting the government on the back, and all paid for by the taxpayers of this province.

This legislation, I think, is very reasonable. Nobody is going to be looking at government ads when you're advertising for who you want for a particular position. They're going to be looking at the advocacy ads that you have out there. This is a reasonable piece of legislation. I hope all members, in good conscience, will support it.

The Acting Speaker: This concludes the time allocated for debating ballot item number 13. I will place the question regarding this ballot item at 12 o'clock noon.

DISCLOSURE AND PROTECTION OF ADOPTION INFORMATION ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LA DIVULGATION ET LA PROTECTION DE RENSEIGNEMENTS SUR LES ADOPTIONS

Mr Wettlaufer moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 60, An Act to amend the Vital Statistics Act and the Child and Family Services Act in respect of disclosure and protection of adoption information / *Projet de loi 60, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les statistiques de l'état civil et la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille en ce qui concerne la divulgation et la protection de renseignements sur les adoptions.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): The member for Kitchener Centre has up to 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): I think I would like to go through the preamble.

"The bill amends the Vital Statistics Act to give adopted persons who are at least 18 years old a right of access to their own original birth registration and to give birth parents of an adopted person who is at least 19 years old a right of access to the original birth registration of the adopted person. The rights of access do not apply if either party has, by filing the appropriate notice under the Child and Family Services Act, requested no disclosure of identifying information. The difference of one year allows adopted persons time to file the notices after they reach the age of 18 years.

"Under the Child and Family Services Act, birth parents and adopted persons are entitled to file with the Registrar of Adoption Information written notices of their wish not to have the registrar disclose their identifying information to each other. A person who files that notice can provide a statement of reasons for not wishing to be contacted. A birth parent who files that notice can provide a statement of medical information.

"The registrar forwards the notices to the Registrar General under the Vital Statistics Act who matches them with documents on file. The notices take effect no later than seven days after their filing, so that the Registrar General has time to do the matching. Once the notices are effective, the Registrar General communicates them to adopted persons and birth parents who request a copy of the original birth registration of the adopted person. Contacting the other party despite having received a notice of non-disclosure of information constitutes an offence.

"The bill also amends the Child and Family Services Act to provide that counselling for adopted persons, birth parents and others who may be affected by the disclosure of information about the adoption must be made available on request, but is no longer mandatory.

"The provision that gives a right of access to birth records comes into force one year after the provision that allows birth parents and adoptive persons to file notices requesting no disclosure of their identifying information."

We're all aware that the member for Toronto-Danforth, Ms Churley, put forward a bill earlier this year, Bill 16. It dealt, in part, with what I'm doing, but I felt that her bill went too far. The right of retroactivity that she had in her bill was too all-encompassing.

What we have tried to do is to put a balance in the bill—hopefully it will be legislation—with what the Information and Privacy Commissioner wanted. We met a day before Ms Churley brought her bill forward for second reading, hoping that we could attain some sort of a compromise with her. At that time, she did not want to compromise her position. I understand what she was trying to do and I'm not going to criticize her for it. It's just that I felt I couldn't go along with what she wanted in her bill. That is the purpose behind this bill.

The commissioner has mentioned in a letter to me that: "Providing an unqualified right of disclosure of adoption information to adoptees and birth parents represents a violation of generally accepted privacy principles. The right to file a no-contact notice does not go far enough to protect the reasonable expectations of privacy that may have existed at the time of adoption."

She also states that she would not object to a bill that created a retroactive right of access to information by adoptees and birth parents where adoptions occurred prior to the enactment of the legislation, if the bill also allowed these individuals the opportunity to file a disclosure veto, which is in my bill.

I received an interesting letter on June 5, dated June 1, from a lady in London by the name of Ellen Walker. I'm going to quote a little bit of what she said:

"I worked with birth mothers for many years and witnessed the rejection, loneliness and heartache of giving up a child to another family but also knowing someone would be able to give the child a better life.

"It is a witch hunt on the part of NDP MPP Churley to go back to the 1940s for birth mothers. How cruel. Those birth mothers are near the end of their lives. They do not need this constant harassment in the House.

"It would be a betrayal on the part of the PC Party to allow retroactive info. They were told their records would be sealed. How can anyone with any compassion or heart destroy their family now?"

We have really tried to be reasonable with this bill. I sat down with the Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services and found that the ministry is committed to improving the disclosure system so that individuals can find their personal information, the identifying information listed in the birth registration and adoption orders. However, the ministry also said that sometimes a reunion between a birth parent and child is not in the best interests of the parent or the child. This bill would allow adoptees or birth parents to block or refuse to share information, effectively declining any contact by the other party.

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I was trying to keep any emotion out of the bill. Adoption is a very emotional subject. I think many of us have relatives who have either been adopted or are adoptive parents or had birth parents who gave up a child. In my case, two of the three apply. I know how they feel. It's difficult for these individuals. I don't think the people who have given up their children ever get over it, but I also feel that in some cases they don't want their spouses or their present families to know that they were the father or mother of another child 40 or 50 years ago. They don't want, that for the very reason that they don't want to destroy their family, and I can understand that as well.

We were trying to have an element of stability in the legislation, to make sure the legislation provided that element. I hope we have succeeded. I expect there is going to be considerable debate about it today on both sides of the issue. I welcome that debate. I hope we can keep emotion out of it, although that would be very difficult.

I think we have to understand the interests of all parties. Again, that was an attempt in this bill, trying our hardest to keep in mind everybody's interests, whether it be the adoptive parents, the birth parents or the adoptee. I welcome any debate. I welcome the concerns that will be voiced by other members on all sides of the House and I look forward to it.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): This is an extremely difficult topic, which I think all parties struggle with. I did not support Bill 16, as you're aware. I know that one of the difficulties with finding birth information in contacts is a simple underfunding of the current system by the provincial government. If one party

registers, it can be a matter of years before the other is found.

But I've struggled, and I've struggled more in the last two weeks probably than in all of my life previous to this, because I have what I believe are firm, concrete examples of when it is not in the best interests to share the information. On the other hand, I think these cases are extremely small in number, and I am increasingly convinced that it is wrong to penalize everyone because of the one or two or three examples that I can bring to mind. In the particular children's aid society that I'm on the board of, for years mothers giving up children for adoption were read a statement which included the phrase that, "Your name will never be shared with the adoptive parents or the child." I suspect that the vast majority of these are not interested in that being honoured and may indeed want contact. But there are some who may have heard it and want that kept.

I know in other cases from time to time people have committed horrible acts. I can think, as a foster parent, of children who have come into care and subsequently moved on to adoption, where it's not in the best interests for contact to be made by that birth parent with that child, but it's a very small minority.

I am wondering, and perhaps this needs to come out at committee, if there is a mechanism whereby judges could in very rare instances give an order at the time a birth parent is convicted of an offence or when a child is made a crown ward, which is necessary to move on to adoption, that there be a bar or a ban on contact being made between the parties, certainly on the part of the birth parent initiating it. There are very few examples, but from time to time people do horrible things to their children and are bad people.

I'm also wondering if we can reverse it—there may be a few birth parents in this province who believe that they have the protection of not having their name given—and open a registry for a period of time, for six months or a year, and allow individuals who believe it is important to them that their name never be divulged to register. If they do not register, then they automatically remain in the system and the information can be shared. I believe for some people it is extremely important. I've been contacted by some who naturally can't go public because it is that important to them, but there are very few.

I know of one Web page but I understand there are a number of Web pages where an adoptee seeking to find a birth parent or a birth parent seeking to find their child can register. I happen to think that's great. There are two parties who have come forward, voluntarily wishing contact with each other, and I think it's great. But I do think it is important that for the few exceptions, when we're making a bill retroactive, we give the parents who don't want to have their information shared the chance to opt out. I highly suspect it will be very few. It will be unfair to the adoptee, but you have to balance the unfairness to the adoptee versus the unfairness to the birth parent. I would feel better. I think I could certainly support a bill that would be retroactive if there is some

opportunity—and it would have to be limited, from the sheer viewpoint of making the system work—to allow it to happen.

I am more and more persuaded by the number of individuals who have the desire and the urge or the need even to have contact. I can't support this bill as it stands. I think we need to go back to a bill that will facilitate more contacts, and I don't believe this one does it. But I do sincerely believe there need to be amendments made that would allow a birth parent to opt out for very special reasons.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I supported Bill 16, the bill that Marilyn Churley, the member for Toronto-Danforth, has brought forward. I think if we sent that bill to committee, we would be able to deal with some of the questions that have been raised here today.

I'll be speaking against Bill 60 but taking the opportunity to thank my colleague for all of her work and her unflagging desire to make sure that adoptees and birth parents have access to the information they desperately need. I will leave the remaining time to my colleague because I know she has so much to say on this bill and other matters.

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services): I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 60 today and thank my colleague for bringing this forward in the Legislature.

I think, as all have indicated, this is a very sensitive topic for adoptees, for birth parents and also for legislators, because we know that everybody on all sides of this topic is quite passionate about this particular matter.

I am speaking in favour of this bill today because I think for future adoptions this bill once and for all will begin to bring clarity to the system and allow birth parents and adoptees to find more information about each other.

I think it goes without saying that all of us understand it's very important to find ways to support families. While on the one hand I want to compliment my colleague across the way for unceasingly bringing this forward to find some sort of resolution, I also want to indicate that when there were other ideas on how to work together and find solutions to try to bring this issue forward in some sort of compromise or workable solution, without confrontation, I was disappointed that Ms Churley could not find the ability—at the time, at any rate—to work with us. So I guess it will have to be done through a legislative committee. So I compliment Mr Wettlaufer for bringing forward another point of view that gives us another way to look at this whole very complex matter.

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I do want to say that this government understands that it is important to help adoptees and birth families find each other. In 1995, there were 18,000 adoptees in Ontario waiting to search for a birth relative. When we came into office in 1995, we were very concerned about this. We found that waiting list and that number of people unacceptable. So our government took action. We have

committed money and staff to eliminate the backlog. I want to inform this House that now all searches are initiated within three months. That is a tremendous difference compared to the seven years that it used to be under the former NDP government.

In the matter of disclosing adoption information, there are many different and strongly held views on this. It often, I think without exception, comes from personal, heart-wrenching experiences. That is why it is so very important, and puts the onus on the government, to make sure that whatever actions are taken, respect is given to all parties: the adoptees, the birth parents and the adoptive parents.

Access to adoption records is currently limited in Ontario. Adoptees and birth parents are not, under the present legislation, given—and this is the word that's important—unilateral right of access to identifying information except in the case of health, safety and welfare, where it may be disclosed without consent. We want to improve the disclosure system so that individuals can find the personal identifying information listed in birth registrations and adoption orders. This bill would make it easier for adopted children to find contact and updated medical information about their birth parents and would also help birth parents learn about the children they placed for adoption.

As one of the speakers here said, "It's not always in the best interests of the child or the parent to seek a reunion." So this bill will allow adoptees and birth parents to block or refuse, effectively, to share information, declining contact by the other party.

We know that many want an open approach to disclosing adoption information, but at the same time, I think it is very, very important that we find a way to respect the rights of people who, upon giving up their child for adoption, did not expect their information to be released. Privacy is very important.

To address these concerns, this bill would ensure that only parents who give their children up for adoption after this bill passes would be subject to the changes within. In this way, birth parents will know when they place their child what is expected from them and what they can expect in the future.

We are sensitive to the fact that changing the rules now for disclosing adoption information is unfair to birth parents, who in the past had an expectation that their privacy would be protected. We feel it is essential that balancing both the needs of parents and children is respected.

The issue has come before this House many times. One of the things we have heard from the advocates is that the requirement for mandatory counselling be changed. I agree with that. People who make the decision to search out their past in this way do not do so frivolously. This bill will give the people the option of getting counselling, and it responds to the message we heard time and time again from the community.

In addition to drastically cutting the waiting list for searches, it's important to understand that the govern-

ment has made other changes within the existing legislation to the adoption disclosure register. We have improved the medical information available to adoptees and made the application process simpler and more accessible. I spoke to someone just the other day who indicated that that information had been shared with one of his family members in just under three weeks. As well, we have allowed for more detailed information to be released if, through the search process, we find the birth parents are deceased.

I think, through the efforts of my colleague across the way, we have an appreciation that this is an issue that requires action. It is complicated social policy, and I think it is important that we respond to society's changing attitudes on adoption. What has concerned me is that in days past we have been presented in this House with essentially what I would consider an all-or-nothing option. This has troubled me greatly because I think, as a member of the government, it is important that we always strive to find the right balance. It's so critically important that we maintain fairness to those who have entrusted their information to the government in days past and have expected that fairness, that information, that sharing, to be honoured. That is what has troubled me about this for so long. We want to ensure that all improvements to adoption disclosure services strike that balance between helping the adult adoptees and the birth relatives who do want to reunite, while protecting those who have trusted us with their privacy.

I commend my colleague Mr Wettlaufer for bringing the bill forward. This has taken courage. This is a bill designed on the go-forward basis. In my view, this is the right thing to do. I thank my colleague across the way, Mr Parsons, for his advice. Perhaps there is a way, once this bill can go to committee, that through working together and trying to find a way, perhaps with amendments—it is a very complicated matter. I say that in Mr Wettlaufer's work I know that he has tried to find ways to add as much flexibility as possible while still maintaining integrity in this position. One of the key challenges will be to find ways to speak to those in the adoptive community, and I use that word broadly, so that when any change might be undertaken, all the right people are notified fairly and properly before any changes are undertaken.

I simply want to say I thank my colleague for introducing this and bringing another perspective, a fair perspective, I think, that is essentially designed on a go-forward basis. I will support him in this endeavour, and I thank him again for bringing it forward.

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I just want to state right off the bat that I won't be supporting this bill. In her presentation, the minister said twice that this is a "go-forward bill." But it's actually a regressive bill, because it isn't going forward, it's not doing what the honourable member Ms Churley wanted to do. We need a piece of legislation that is progressive and is going to work in the best interests of adoptees and those

families in this province. That's why we should be supporting Bill 16.

The minister said that it requires action and it's all or nothing. If she wants to see some action, then let's get Marilyn Churley's bill to committee and have it debated and not continue to have this bill blocked. It's amazing in the four years that I've been in this Legislature how many times this bill has come forward, received second reading and then been blocked. I don't think it's appropriate that that should be happening. Quite honestly, you get to a point in this Legislature where I say we should call the question and let those who are in favour stand up and let those who are opposed stand up. But let's call the question and get on with it and not continue to delay this bill and put it on the back burner. Let's get Bill 16 to committee. But Bill 60 isn't a piece of legislation that is moving this forward; it's a step backwards in time.

We've certainly received a number of e-mails and correspondence. I think some of these e-mails need to be read into the record.

From Parent Finders National Capital Region, which has been supporting individuals and members for over 28 years: "We consider this bill to be retrogressive, in that its clauses show a punitive approach to family meeting families. In addition, this bill shows a clear disregard of all new thinking in adoption, of all new research in adoption, and of all similar legislative changes in adoption in Canada. We are, frankly, appalled to see such legislation showing up at this time in Ontario."

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From a constituent of my own from Dorchester, Ontario: "For many years the adoption community has been fighting to get the adoption records opened for ... adoptees ... Bill 16, that is currently on the table, ... would allow adoptees to learn their heritage and more importantly their medical history.

"By allowing Bill 60 to be brought forward it would set Ontario members of the adoption community back in time several decades.

"Over the past 50 or more years illnesses and diseases in families have been recognized and labelled. Birth parents of those adoptees, with the expertise of our educated medical researchers, have recognized severe diseases that have plagued their families. This knowledge must be passed on to the adoptees in order for them to continue on with a healthy life....

"I am a reunited birth parent and an adoptive parent of four adult adoptees who have searched and learned their heritage and medical background history. My birth daughter has learned, although it was too late, where the genetic disease came from that her son was born with but unfortunately her son died of this illness when he was seven years old."

From another e-mail: "As an adopted child nothing would please me more than to know where I came from, who I look like and what traits I get from who."

Another: "Many, if not all of you, do not know what it's like to be adopted, do not know what it feels like to

have no idea who you look like or what genes you may be carrying."

Another comment: "Bill 60 does not reflect the wishes of the adoption community."

Another e-mail: "This is the first time I have ever supported a political action.

"I am almost 50 years old. I have no adopted family left. I want to know and deserve to know who it is that I am related to.

"My own adopted sons will one day know who their entire family is. Why must I be an orphan forever?"

Another e-mail: "My husband was adopted when he was a baby. He's been searching for over five years with the help of the Canadian Adoptees Registry.... My husband was finally successful. The relief he and our children experienced at being able to get medical history was monumental."

Those are just some of the numerous e-mails that all of us have received. I hope that everybody has taken an opportunity to read them. Let's be progressive, not regressive. Let's stand up and be counted, and not find ways to block a bill in trying to make a trade of two private members' bills for one. Let's stand up and do the job that every one of us was elected to do, and that's to stand up and be counted, not try and hide behind one reason or another. Let's just get on with it, not for the sake of Ms Churley but for the sake of these individuals who are here and the countless others across the province. Let's stand up and be counted. I say, at some point, let's not delay this and let's call the question.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I'd like to welcome members from the adoption community who are with us once again today. They've been down to this place many times over the past 20 or 30 years, I believe. Let me be clear here: this issue has been studied to death. We are not reinventing the wheel here. It sounds as though, in listening to the government members, they haven't read or haven't paid any attention to the research and recommendations that have come to this House under every government of every stripe over the past many, many years. Every single report that has been written since the 1970s, every single committee that has sat on this issue, has recommended that we move forward with adoption disclosure reform now, retroactively.

When the minister and Mr Wettlaufer talked about calling me to a meeting to talk about some kind of compromise, I must admit I was a little bit excited and pleased, thinking, "Perhaps we can talk here." But I went to the meeting to find out that what they were talking about was the bill that Mr Wettlaufer put forward today, which is not retroactive. I must tell you that, upon reading the bill and consulting legislative counsel, it's an ambiguous bill; it's not all that well written. There are some who believe that, accidentally—although Mr Wettlaufer has made it clear today and on other occasions that he doesn't want it to be retroactive—if this bill were to be passed, it could very well end up in court. God knows what would happen then, because it's so badly written.

We all know that the intent is for this bill to not be retroactive, and that defeats the purpose of what this is all about. We've been fighting for years for retroactivity in this province. Most adoptions today are open adoptions. The bill is not needed for today's adoptions. These people are here because they've either been seeking and have found each other or are seeking. These people are here because some of them have been ill. There's a lawsuit that was just—Kariann Ford, who was down at the committee hearings, found out that in her records provided by her birth mother there was information about a deadly disease that's hereditary that she wasn't told about. Her birth mother put that on the file when this woman was 16 years old. They had tried to find each other through that and at least get the medical information relayed, and it wasn't done. They recently settled that suit. That's just one example. There are so many others.

This is about retroactivity, and to try to pretend otherwise and say, "Ms Churley won't compromise" is pure nonsense. We don't need this bill today. I urge people to understand that this just muddies the waters. We do not need this. Let me say, and I believe the adoption community would agree with me, that it is better to pass nothing, which has been what's been going on in this House for a number of years, than to pass this bill today and send it to committee, because it is not retroactive.

It would be a cruel hoax if we were to pass this bill, because many people out there, the people who actually want adoption disclosure reform, the ones seeking, the ones looking, will not be helped at all. To make matters worse, the way this bill is now worded, it could in fact, if this bill were to pass, make things worse than the existing situation.

I'd like to point out that the minister was wrong when she said searches are now only taking three months. You ask these people—it's still taking years. And the system, no matter how long it takes, is not adequate and doesn't work properly.

The other thing this bill possibly does—and again, because it's so badly written it's hard—we're trying to get clarification, but legislative counsel believes that although this bill is not retroactive in terms of people being able to get information and search, it is retroactive, they believe, when it comes to the draconian \$100,000 fine that could be laid on some of these people sitting here, from Parent Finders, the very people—Holly Kramer, who helped me find my son. We went outside the system and found him. Can you believe it that under this bill she, Parent Finders, could be fined \$100,000? The way this bill is worded means that, if it's passed, you will only be able to search within the confines of the registry. If you go off on your own with a private detective or with Parent Finders and other groups who do this work and make a contact based on information received through other means, you could actually get a \$100,000 fine. This is incredible.

I can only believe that's put in there because one of the things—and I'll point it out again, and I've pointed it

out time after time and it's all over the world; we're not reinventing the wheel here—is that there's a contact veto. I know there's at least one person, and many others, who don't even support that, because in jurisdictions now all over the world where this has taken place—in England since the 1970s—and progressively as other jurisdictions are passing such bills, they're not even putting in a contact veto. They're not even putting it in any more. In BC where they have a disclosure veto, which is what the privacy commissioner is now saying she'd like to see, there are lawsuits over it. There are all kinds of problems with it.

What this is all about is an individual's right to know personal information about themselves. So when we talk about my rights as a birth mother or the rights of the adoptive parents—listen, I forget when it was, but about 20 years ago the adoptive parents were able to stop their adopted adult child—I shouldn't use "child" because this is all about adults. The adoptive parents would try to stop them, in some cases, from getting information, and that has been ruled against the law. People have the right to their own personal information, and that is what this is all about.

Let me point out to people that, when the government members stand up and say it's a very complicated issue and a very difficult issue, I know it's an emotional issue, but it's not complicated. If you read the information that's there—go to the files. There's 30 years of research that shows this kind of retroactive bill, correcting a wrong that was done to people in a different social time that has caused so much harm and continues to cause so much harm, as aging birth parents are getting older and dying, as their adopted children who are now growing up or are middle-aged are searching for them, as more and more people are finding out after the fact, in this age of understanding genetic diseases better, that they have diseases that, had they known about them, they would not have passed on to their children—this literally can be a life-saving matter we're talking about here.

1140

When Mr Wettlaufer first introduced his bill, without consulting with me or anybody from the adoption community, without reading any of the research, he based his rationale on a letter I received from the privacy commissioner. I asked for it because I knew what had been said in other jurisdictions and I thought, well, the privacy commissioner, as she admitted to me, has a very narrow scope. She said that adoption disclosure was outside her scope, but she wanted to comment on it anyway as the privacy commissioner. She expressed, within that narrow scope, concerns about privacy, without the knowledge of other jurisdictions, which most people don't have, and the fact that other privacy commissioners wrote very similar reports, and that on social considerations other governments went ahead anyway.

Since that time, she has written a letter that Mr Wettlaufer read a bit of into the record today, and she would now agree to retroactivity should there be, in addition, an information veto. I can tell you that there are

all kinds of problems with that, as we're seeing in BC and other jurisdictions. I don't know; perhaps the adoption community just wants to fight on until people are willing to be progressive enough to move on and give people this right to their own records and their own information.

I'll tell you what the special commissioner, Professor Ralph Garber, said in 1985. The then Liberal government commissioned the Disclosure of Adoption Information report, and this is a direct quote from him. This was back in 1985, and it goes back even before then: "Facts surrounding a person's adoption belong to that person regardless where the information is stored; revealing those facts has not been shown to cause harm; and renunciation of a right to parent a child at an earlier time does not limit reconsidering a relationship with that child later on."

That was back in the 1980s. Every report you will look at, when the studies are done and the information is collected, shows very clearly that that information, even in terms of human rights, belongs to that individual.

That's what my bill is all about. I would urge members to please—you may want to support your colleague. I understand that. There's a sense that when a colleague comes forward with a bill, it's important to him or her to get it passed and to say, "Even if I don't support it, I'll support it so it can go to committee." I don't want members to do that today, and I'll tell you why. As I said earlier, it will simply muddy the waters and complicate things further, because it is not retroactive.

We all agree within the adoption community—I'm talking about thousands of people who have been struggling for years to get reform in this province—that this bill does absolutely nothing for them. It does not carry us forward. I think we would all agree that we'd rather just stay where we are than to actually pass a bill that is not retroactive in terms of being able to get the information and make the contact, but also could actually shut down a process that is working for people—because the government system isn't working—and that is, for third parties or they themselves to do the searches and then make the contacts. My God, if this bill goes through and people can be fined \$100,000 for going outside the system and doing that, that's reprehensible. It's just not acceptable.

It's not acceptable to me for a member to call me to a meeting to discuss a compromise and then present me with a bill that would not be retroactive, which goes against the grain of everything my bill stands for and everything the community wants. Then to say he's trying to find a compromise and for the minister to say I'm not willing to work on a compromise—my God, this is not about compromise; this is about shutting down what we've been trying to do and build for the last 30 years. It's time for us to move forward.

If people would only read all the research and reports that are available, they might understand what this is all about. What is extremely frustrating to me and to those involved in this fight is that people talk as though we're

reinventing the wheel here. Just since we last debated my bill in this House, Alberta has passed a bill. We've got Newfoundland, Alberta, BC, Yukon—Northwest Territories, I think. We've got jurisdictions all over the world—all over Europe and in the US. It's been done, folks. So when you stand up and talk about individual cases—by the way, under my bill, people could file a contact veto. Again, if you look at the information and the studies that have been done in other jurisdictions, it works. It actually works, because people who are seeking each other are so respectful in the process. After losing each other for so long, when they finally get the information to know they can actually make that contact again, the last thing anybody wants to do is offend or hurt the possibility of that contact taking place and a good relationship developing.

I urge people that if you don't want to support my bill, fine, but don't let this one pass today. I would recommend that my bill go to committee and we can move forward from there.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm very pleased to join in the debate with respect to the member for Kitchener Centre's bill—and that's what we're debating here today.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Let's get the feds in there.

Mr Tascona: I'm going to get to the federal government.

This bill is An Act to amend the Vital Statistics Act and the Child and Family Services Act in respect of disclosure and protection of adoption information. There certainly are issues with respect to this, and the member for Toronto-Danforth has raised one that she specifically thinks is important; that is, the issue of retroactivity. She makes the comment that it would be better for nothing at all to happen here today with Mr Wettlaufer's bill than to pass it.

Interjections.

Mr Tascona: With respect, this is private members' business. He has a right to put forth a bill he believes in, and he's done that.

Dealing with the retroactivity of this bill, I just look at this issue in terms of what we're dealing with here in terms of disclosure and protection of adoption information. I recall a day when the NDP was in government—I believe the member for Toronto-Danforth was in cabinet—and I didn't see anything happen with respect to adoption. From what I understand, all that came forth was through a private member; I think it was Tony Martin who brought forth an adoption bill.

So here we stand today, in 2003. Mr Wettlaufer from Kitchener Centre has brought forth a piece of legislation to deal with this issue. There are issues with respect to retroactivity; for example, the federal gun registry is being heatedly debated in the House of Commons specifically on the issue of retroactivity. The federal government won't go into the retroactivity area. They believe it's against the charter of rights to go retroactively with a specific piece of legislation. That's a

fundamental issue with respect to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms when we deal with public statutes.

We also have the letter with respect to privacy that was given to Mr Wettlaufer from Brian Beamish of the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, and it very clearly addresses the issue of retroactivity. There are privacy issues; there are also charter issues with respect to that issue.

Let's focus on what's before us today, which has been put forth by the private member, who has a right to bring forth legislation like any other member in this House and not be berated for not having supported someone else's bill. He has a right to put forth a bill. I think he's put a lot of thought into this bill. There are a lot of protections that are put in place, very similar to the legislation, I understand, in British Columbia. So I say to the member for Kitchener Centre that I know he's a hard-working member, I know he's put a lot of thought into this piece of legislation and he has a right as a private member to come forward with it, and we have a right as other private members to debate it and vote on it, and that's what I intend to do.

1150

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): I am happy to have this opportunity to speak today on a topic that I think is very important. I will not be supporting this bill, as I have had an opportunity to review more than 100 e-mails that have come to my office about this bill from people who could possibly be impacted by it. That is compelling in and of itself. We as members receive communications regularly from constituents and from people who will be impacted by legislation. The volume of letters and e-mails we have received on this particular piece of legislation urging us as legislators not to advance it so it could become law in the province—it is seen as retrogressive—was certainly noteworthy and something I know I talked with my caucus members about.

I really have a number of reasons for not supporting this bill. I have, as the record will indicate, supported Ms Churley's Bill 77 and also supported Bill 16, and spoke in favour of those bills on both occasions. I had the opportunity to attend the committee meetings that were held here at the Legislative Assembly. I was most impressed by the presentations that were made at that time. For me, certainly, reading a piece of legislation does not have the same impact as when we go to committee and hear from the public—represented by the people in this room—their views and thoughts on proposed legislation. On that occasion I was quite impressed with the presentations that were made.

All of them, I might add, were in favour of Ms Churley's bill. When I reflected and had the opportunity to review the public record of those presentations, clearly the most important part of the bill that was being considered by the committee was the fact it was retroactive. I recall, particularly, the stories of people who had health issues, who said that if they had had the opportunity to

access and understand that there was a particular health issue in their birth family, that would have enabled them to make decisions in their own lives that may have prevented, or at the very least enabled them to understand, health issues they needed to be aware of. I think it's important to note that this bill has no consideration of that.

I have a lot of things I want to speak to. It has been suggested by members of the government that this bill is a compromise. This is not a compromise. This really does very little to change what is in place in the laws of Ontario at the present time. Ms Churley's bill, on the other hand, would be more akin to legislation that is in place in many progressive jurisdictions around the world. It was at the committee meetings that I understood that in Canada, British Columbia, Newfoundland, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut have opened their adoption records. England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, Argentina, Mexico, Denmark, Holland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Austria, Germany, France and New Zealand all have their adoptions open. I guess my question is, I don't understand why we in this province are so reticent to provide enabling legislation.

I have every respect for those people who were given to understand that their circumstances would always be their own business and their information would not be shared. And Ms Churley's bill does include the contact veto component, which is designed to address the issues that have been raised around the privacy commissioner. I do respect an individual's request for privacy, and I believe that Ms Churley's bill indeed did that.

I don't think that this is a progressive bill. Certainly the contacts that have been made to me about it have not been positive. I will not be supporting the bill this morning.

Mr Bob Wood (London West): As many members know, I favour as much openness as possible in the adoption process. I do that because I think giving people all the facts about themselves gives them the maximum opportunity to live their lives in the most positive way possible. I know that members on both sides of the House feel strongly about this issue and I think they all have reasons that are genuine and credible.

My heart in this debate, however, is with the side of as much information as possible being available to the individual. But my head also tells me that a good idea badly executed becomes a bad idea. I think that when we look at the history of adoption in this province, we have to note that people who were involved in adoptions years ago became involved on the basis of the ground rules that existed at that time. To make fundamental changes to those ground rules later, in effect without their consent, surely is not fair to them, nor is it likely that those people are going to perceive themselves as having been dealt with fairly by the government.

I think our object with this bill or any bill about adoption should be reconciliation and healing. I think we have to proceed with great care to make sure we're doing that

and not unintentionally involving ourselves in something that doesn't promote that.

This bill I think is a step forward. I am not at this point convinced that retroactivity is the right route to go. I would invite members of the House to consider that this bill should go to committee. The principle of this, which I have voted in favour of on a number of occasions, is greater openness. That's a sound principle. The execution of it is a very legitimate matter that should be considered in committee.

I invite the House to support this bill in principle, refer it to a committee and give the committee a chance to take a look at the details. I hope that it will be possible to get from committee a bill that this House can consider and vote on for third reading.

I would like to make one brief observation about this bill. There's been a lot of talk about privacy considerations, and I think those concerns are well founded. I think the fact that this bill increases penalties for privacy violations is a good provision. It may well be the provisions themselves, as to whom they apply to, have to be looked at, and that should be done at committee, but the principle is surely sound: to punish privacy violations.

Mr Wettlaufer: I want to thank all of the members who have spoken on this bill: the members from Prince Edward-Hastings and Trinity-Spadina, the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services, the members from Elgin-Middlesex-London, Toronto-Danforth, Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, and London West.

The one thing I would like to say to the members—the member from Prince Edward-Hastings and I share a lot of beliefs on the adoption procedure and adoption legislation. He did say that we need a bill to allow a birth parent to opt out. I believe that this bill does that. That is the purpose of the legislation, to allow the parent to opt out.

The Information and Privacy Commissioner referred to the member from Toronto-Danforth's bill. She said it that was too exclusive, that once the contact veto was withdrawn, it could not be renewed. In this bill here, contact and disclosure vetoes can be withdrawn and renewed at any time, any number of times. We have tried very hard to provide a bill which will meet the needs of the majority of those impacted. I would be more than willing to have this go to committee. I would love to hear what the members of the committee would have to say on it. The member for Toronto-Danforth said that it was poorly written. That's an accusation against leg counsel, the same leg counsel that she likes to support so many times. I'm a little surprised. I thought that's why we had lawyers around here.

The member for Toronto-Danforth was the registrar general. Why did she not pass legislation herself?

The Acting Speaker: This completes the time allocated for debate on ballot item 14, it being 12 o'clock noon. I will now deal with ballot item 13.

PREVENTING PARTISAN ADVERTISING ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 VISANT À EMPÊCHER LA PUBLICITÉ À CARACTÈRE POLITIQUE

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Mr Bradley has moved second reading of Bill 91, An Act to end government spending on partisan advertising.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will have the division after I deal with ballot item 14.

DISCLOSURE AND PROTECTION OF ADOPTION INFORMATION ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LA DIVULGATION ET LA PROTECTION DE RENSEIGNEMENTS SUR LES ADOPTIONS

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Mr Wettlaufer moved second reading of Bill 60, An Act to amend the Vital Statistics Act and the Child and Family Services Act in respect to disclosure and protection of adoption information.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the "ayes" have it.

We will now call in the members for second reading of Bill 91. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1201 to 1206.

PREVENTING PARTISAN ADVERTISING ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 VISANT À EMPÊCHER LA PUBLICITÉ À CARACTÈRE POLITIQUE

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): All those in favour will please stand and remain standing until their name is called.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Duncan, Dwight	Parsons, Emie
Bisson, Gilles	Gerretsen, John	Patten, Richard
Bountrogianni, Marie	Hampton, Howard	Peters, Steve
Boyer, Claudette	Kennedy, Gerard	Phillips, Gerry
Bradley, James J.	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Bryant, Michael	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Pupatello, Sandra
Caplan, David	Levac, David	Ramsay, David
Churley, Marilyn	Marchese, Rosario	Sergio, Mario
Colle, Mike	Martel, Shelley	Smitherman, George
Cordiano, Joseph	Martin, Tony	
Dombrowsky, Leona	McMeekin, Ted	

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please stand and remain standing until their name is called.

Nays

Amott, Ted
Baird, John R.
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Brad
Clement, Tony
Cunningham, Dianne
DeFaria, Carl
Ecker, Janet
Elliott, Brenda
Flaherty, Jim
Galt, Doug
Gilchrist, Steve

Gill, Raminder
Guzzo, Garry J.
Hudak, Tim
Johns, Helen
Johnson, Bert
Kells, Morley
Klees, Frank
Martiniuk, Gerry
Mazzilli, Frank
McDonald, AL
Miller, Norm
Molinari, Tina R.
Munro, Julia

Mushinski, Marilyn
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Sampson, Rob
Sterling, Norman W.
Stewart, R. Gary
Tascona, Joseph N.
Tsubouchi, David H.
Tumbull, David
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Wilson, Jim
Wood, Bob
Young, David

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 31; the nays are 38.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost. We will open the door for 30 seconds.

DISCLOSURE AND PROTECTION OF ADOPTION INFORMATION ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LA DIVULGATION ET LA PROTECTION DE RENSEIGNEMENTS SUR LES ADOPTIONS

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): All those in favour will stand and remain standing until their name is called.

Ayes

Amott, Ted
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Brad
Clement, Tony
Cunningham, Dianne
DeFaria, Carl
Ecker, Janet
Elliott, Brenda
Flaherty, Jim
Galt, Doug
Gilchrist, Steve

Gill, Raminder
Guzzo, Garry J.
Hudak, Tim
Johns, Helen
Kells, Morley
Klees, Frank
Martiniuk, Gerry
Mazzilli, Frank
McDonald, AL
Miller, Norm
Molinari, Tina R.
Munro, Julia

Sampson, Rob
Sterling, Norman W.
Stewart, R. Gary
Tascona, Joseph N.
Tsubouchi, David H.
Tumbull, David
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Wilson, Jim
Wood, Bob
Young, David

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please stand and remain standing until their name is called.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic
Baird, John R.
Bisson, Gilles
Bountrogianni, Marie
Boyer, Claudette
Bradley, James J.
Bryant, Michael
Caplan, David
Churley, Marilyn
Colle, Mike
Cordiano, Joseph
Dombrowsky, Leona

Duncan, Dwight
Gerretsen, John
Hampton, Howard
Kennedy, Gerard
Kormos, Peter
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Levac, David
Marchese, Rosario
Martel, Shelley
Martin, Tony
McMeekin, Ted
Mushinski, Marilyn

Parsons, Ernie
Patten, Richard
Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Prue, Michael
Pupatello, Sandra
Ramsay, David
Ruprecht, Tony
Sergio, Mario
Smitherman, George

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 34; the nays are 34.

The Acting Speaker: I cast my vote in favour.

The ayes being 35, the nays being 34, I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to standing order 96, the bill is now referred to the committee of the whole.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): I request that it be submitted to the standing committee on justice and social policy.

The Acting Speaker: Agreed?

All those in favour will please stand and remain standing.

All those opposed will please stand.

A majority is in favour. The bill will be referred to the standing committee on justice and social policy.

Hon David Turnbull (Associate Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm sure all members would like to recognize the presence of my daughter Nicole, here in the gallery.

The Acting Speaker: That, of course, is not a point of order. Welcome, Nicole.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask unanimous consent for Bill 91 to go to the general government committee.

The Acting Speaker: No.

It being after 12 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1214 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

RUSSIAN CANADIAN COMMUNITY

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): Just 13 years ago, a monumental event took place that shook the world and changed the geopolitical nature of Europe and Asia: a new Russia was born. On June 12, 1990, the Russian Parliament proclaimed the national sovereignty of the Russian Federation. Russia started to build a new democratic civic society where political and economic freedoms and human rights are its main values. Today we congratulate the Russian people for joining our democratic countries and embracing the values of freedom and liberty and new independence.

Today, as we celebrate, we're also mindful of the contributions that Russian Canadians have made all over our country. In fact, the first Russians appeared on Canada's shores in 1790 as fur traders. Since then, as immigration waves came to this country, we find that Russian Canadians have made contributions in all aspects of Canadian life, and we share in that pleasure.

Our congratulations go to the distinguished guests who have joined us today in the gallery from the Russian consulate in Toronto, which started its activities half a year ago to promote trade and cultural ties between friendly nations.

I'm delighted today to introduce them to this Legislature: Nikolay Smirnov, consul general of the Russian

Federation; Valery Timashov, deputy consul general; Valery Tokmakov, president of Tokmakov TV Productions; Roman Ostrovsky, business consultant; Yuri Vaulin, senior adviser to the vice-mayor of Moscow; Sergei Kobzev, representative of the federal construction department of Russia; Duchess Olga Kulikovskiy-Romanoff; and Alina Pekarsky.

I'm delighted they have joined us today. Congratulations to them.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): We welcome our honoured guests.

FAIRY LAKE ARTISANS FESTIVAL

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): This coming weekend, June 14 and 15, the North Newmarket Lions Club is hosting the fifth annual Fairy Lake Artisans Festival and juried art show and sale.

The first festival was held in 1998. With 55 artisans, the event attracted 3,500 visitors to Newmarket. In five years, the artisans festival has grown to 115 artisans and 11,000 visitors. Artisans and visitors travel from all over Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Florida to take part in this exciting event.

Artists' work in woodwork, leather works, glass blowing, metal works, painting and handmade clothing are all on display and are for sale. Everything is handmade by the artisans. Even when moulds are used, the mould must be of original design. A jury of accomplished artisans judges all applications to ensure that only high-quality products are displayed in the show.

There is entertainment for the whole family. Musicians and balloon artists perform throughout the weekend.

Why not come to Newmarket for Father's Day? There is something for the whole family at the Fairy Lake Artisans Festival, June 14 and 15, 10 am to 5 pm, at Fairy Lake in the Wesley Brooks Conservation Area in the town of Newmarket.

A very special thank you to Elda Brown, Ernie Crossland, Dan Rivet, Michael Springford and the rest of the North Newmarket Lions Club volunteers who make the artisans festival the great success it has become.

MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): There is not a day that I enter this chamber without being in awe of the responsibility I have as a member of provincial Parliament. Decisions made in this Legislature affect health care, education and so many other matters for both us and for future generations.

We are privileged to be here, but a tremendous responsibility rests on our shoulders: a responsibility to every taxpayer in Ontario to be a trustee of public money, a responsibility to be a role model and a responsibility to be personally accountable.

Clearly, the Minister of the Environment has lost this vision. While his method of financing his family trip to

Europe demonstrates bad judgment, his continually changing version of how it was funded clearly demonstrates his inability to assume responsibility for his actions. His explanation that everyone does it is a child-like defence of the incident. This remark unfairly attacks the reputations of members on both sides of this House.

Democracy works only when the public can have absolute trust in the actions of their elected officials. Our citizens need to have total faith that a cabinet minister is working for them as their servant. This is clearly not the case with the Minister of the Environment's European excursion.

For the sake of democracy, for the sake of the interests of the people of Ontario, for the sake of our citizens being able to have faith in our system, I call upon the Minister of the Environment to submit his resignation from cabinet, effective immediately.

HEALTH SERVICES IN BARRIE-SIMCOE-BRADFORD

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): As MPP for the riding of Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, I wish to thank all my constituents who attended my seventh annual pancake breakfast, held at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 147 in Barrie, and first pancake breakfast held at the Innisfil Lions Hall. Proceeds go toward women's cancer research, treatment and prevention at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Barrie, through the state-of-the-art women's imaging centre.

I am proud of our government's health investments in my riding, which include the new Royal Victoria Hospital, opened in 1997—RVH has Simcoe county's only MRI machine; the expansion of RVH's cancer care centre is to be completed this summer; the new RVH kidney dialysis centre; the new RVH kidney stroke recovery centre; and the RVH expansion and the regional cancer centre are at the final approval stage at the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

The north Innisfil centre recently opened to serve our seniors at Sandy Cove Acres. The Southlake Regional Health Centre expansion and the new regional cardiac care centre are some of the other accomplishments.

I am very proud of being able to provide these closer-to-home health services to my riding, which is Barrie, Innisfil and Bradford-West Gwillimbury. It's important for people to get their health care services closer to home, and we've accomplished that.

PHILIPPINES INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): It is my honour to rise today to help the Legislature acknowledge and appreciate Filipino independence day. Today, June 12, represents 105 years of Philippine independence. If you look outside the Legislature today, the Philippine flag is flying, as it is down at city hall, where a number of our members—in fact, 10, including our

leader, Dalton McGuinty—attended a ceremony a short time ago, where a number of attendees still are.

In 1898 was the beginning of what Filipinos recognize as their independence, and they recognize today in the way they behave today here in Canada as exemplary citizens, Dr Rizal and the sacrifice he made at the beginning of that revolution.

But there have been other struggles, and those struggles have conditioned the people who have been enormous contributors as a group to the well-being of Canada. What then should happen in return from the rest of the Canadian community—and I say, Mr Speaker, that these things put meaning into flag-raising; the unconditional respect of their citizens to acknowledge the amazing contribution they've made, people like Monina Lim-Seriano and Pilar Miguel and Ricky Castellui, people who attend today and a number of the people who are in attendance. We also want to acknowledge Alejandro Mosquera, the new consul general from the Philippines, who's with us here today.

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I know that everyone in the gallery will want to especially appreciate the disproportionate role and risk that fell to the Philippine community during the SARS outbreak for the nurses, the doctors and the health care workers. I ask you to join with me in acknowledging this community today.

MISSISSAUGA WATERFRONT FESTIVAL

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): I am pleased to advise all members that the Mississauga Waterfront Festival starts tomorrow and runs until Sunday, June 15, in Port Credit's Memorial Park. Now in its seventh year, the festival features top-rated performers, including world-renowned Jann Arden, Kim Mitchell, Paul James, Loco Zydeco, Infra Red and Carol McCartney.

Families will love the Children's Village, with attractions such as the Toy Castle, McDonald's Sports Zone and many more activities for children of all ages.

The excitement is also on the water, as the Mississauga Canoe Club holds its home regatta. And no one will want to miss the Festival of Fire, lighting up the night sky on Friday and Saturday.

This fun-filled event is a true bargain at just \$5 for children and \$10 for adults for the whole weekend.

On behalf of all Mississauga residents, I am honoured to thank the hard-working festival board, chaired by Pat Anderson, and the many corporate sponsors. While they are too numerous to list, special mention must go to the presenting sponsor, Expedite Plus, and to the Port Credit Business Association, which has been instrumental in developing the festival from the beginning.

No event of this scale can succeed without many dedicated volunteers. We also owe them our gratitude. I would particularly recognize the supporters of the Spon-

sor a Child program, which allows 2,000 children recommended by caring local agencies to enjoy a carefree weekend.

Thank you, everyone, for your commitment to our community.

MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): It seems some people have trouble learning their lesson. Usually when someone gets caught with their hand in the cookie jar, they don't reach right back in for more. But not the Minister of the Environment: he reaches right back in and asks for more.

What's worse is that after he's caught, he keeps changing his story. One day the reporter misquoted him, but it turns out he didn't. One day Chris Stockwell paid for his family himself, but it turns out he didn't. The people of Etobicoke and the people of Ontario have lost all of their confidence in Chris Stockwell. Nobody trusts a word he says, and why should they, when he can't keep his own story straight?

Here are the facts. Chris Stockwell hid expenses through a private company, and he still refuses to say how much that private company paid for his European vacation. Chris Stockwell said he paid for his family to go on vacation with him; he didn't. Chris Stockwell said the reporter made up quotes; the reporter didn't.

The behaviour of Minister Stockwell is despicable and reflects poorly on all people in public office. Shame on Chris Stockwell for channelling his expenses and changing his story. He has no credibility. He has no integrity. He must resign.

Where is the Minister of the Environment today? He can run, but he can't hide.

PAM NEWTON

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I believe that a quality education is necessary for our students to succeed. Teachers play a very important role in this process by opening the door for children to learn. With creativity and energy, students enjoy school and want to learn.

On that note, I would like to bring the attention of this Legislature to a wonderful achievement by a teacher in my riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka. Pam Newton, a grade 5 art and grade 7/8 special-education language teacher at William Beatty Public School in Parry Sound, has been awarded first prize in the A&E Canadian teacher grant program. The A&E television network launched this program in 2001, and this is one of three first-prize grants awarded by the program.

Through these grants, A&E challenges teachers nationwide to develop innovative and challenging curriculum using their classroom programming. Ms Newton used A&E's Michelangelo: Artist and Man program to introduce a study of that artist. Her creative lesson plan

allowed students to see and discuss Michelangelo's famous works in order to better understand the challenges he faced and his achievements.

I met many of these students two weeks ago when they visited this Legislature. They are bright and interesting students with good questions. Ms Newton's art lessons have opened a new world to these students.

I congratulate Ms Newton on this award and grant. It is great news for her and everyone at William Beatty school, especially the students.

NORTHERN ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): Every day that passes now, northern Ontario's economy is being hit. Every city, town or hamlet in the north has lost significant population, a very clear indicator that there is something drastically wrong. What's wrong is a provincial government missing in action, not doing anything, and when they do, their actions further disadvantage communities in the north—sins of omission and sins of commission.

I've raised on numerous occasions the challenges facing the small town of Wawa and surrounding area where hydro is concerned. This Tuesday in Sault Ste Marie we gathered together 50 community leaders to look at the challenges facing my city, the city of Sault Ste Marie.

Today I'm sending an open letter to the Minister of the Environment concerning a small business in a little hamlet just east of Sault Ste Marie in Echo Bay, where a sawmill has been shut down by his ministry for no good reason.

Echo Bay Milling Ltd is a small specialty mill run by two of my constituents, Conrad and Shirley Mainville. The mill employs seven people in a town with few employment opportunities. The mill has recently been shut down by your ministry for supposedly not meeting emission standards. The fact is that the mill does meet the emission standards based on the test that currently exists in legislation. After passing the test that is on the books, your ministry demanded that they be tested again on a new stricter test that does not exist under law.

Minister, we're asking you to intervene immediately to give those people back their ability to make a living.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I was speaking this morning on Bill 60 from the member for Kitchener Centre. I want to correct the Hansard. I referred to the federal gun registry, and I should have been referring to the federal sex offender registry, on the issue of retroactivity.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I thank the member for that.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

DWARF TOSSING BAN ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003

INTERDISANT LE LANCER DE NAIN

Ms Papatello moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 97, An Act to ban dwarf tossing / Projet de loi 97, Loi interdisant le lancer de nain.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Ms Sandra Papatello (Windsor West): I appreciate that this is likely news for the members of this House. We have tried to have a copy of the bill placed on your desk in time for question period today so that you can read it.

The background on this bill is simple. This evening in my riding, a particular establishment is actually planning an event that includes dwarf-tossing. My community is up in arms. My phones have been besieged. The community is outraged that this event should be allowed to happen.

Dwarf-tossing has been banned in other jurisdictions around the world, and I believe it should be banned in Ontario as well. I have had legislative counsel work diligently from just before noon to be ready for this afternoon, the bill to be printed, the bill to be translated, and, as well, time taken so we could speak with the House leader's office, the whip's office and the Attorney General's office. I have had the opportunity to speak with Minister Norm Sterling about its content and he has seen it.

After question period, I would like to ask for second and third reading, giving our minister an opportunity to read the bill. Hopefully, we'll be able to have second and third reading today. My goal is to have the bill become law so that this event will in fact be banned tonight.

1350

The Speaker: I thank the member. As members will know, we do not allow bills to be put on desks before they are introduced. Having said that, now that the bills have been introduced, if members would like copies to be made available to them and if that would be helpful, we will try to accommodate them as quickly as possible.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PUBLIC HEALTH

Ms Sandra Papatello (Windsor West): My question is for the Minister of Health. I'd like to turn your attention to information that was made available on the CBC

this morning which is actually the submission to cabinet on SARS infectious disease control and the ministry's plan for action. Given that information was made public this morning and includes the difficulty the health ministry has had to grapple and cope with SARS, the difficulty and crisis level that our health system has reached, will you stand in your place today and admit that we have not properly funded our public health system to allow us to respond to these kinds of crises? Will you admit that finally today, Minister?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'm not entirely sure what document she is referring to. I do not have a copy of the document she is referring to, and she has not provided one to me.

I can tell the honourable member and, through her, this chamber that indeed public health unit budgets have increased each and every year since 1998, and more is being spent on public health than ever before. Between 1998 and 2002, the overall budgets for all 37 public health units across Ontario increased by over 43%, and staffing levels have also increased between 1998 and 2001, by 31%.

Today in Ontario there are almost 5,200 public health nurses, public health doctors, public health inspectors, scientists and other staff. Certainly, we have all been grappling with a difficult situation, and I must commend public health officials throughout the province for their excellent work on behalf of the people of Ontario.

Ms Papatello: For the minister, I must say that this was presented to cabinet on April 29, and in the cabinet submission to your cabinet at the end of April it identified that public health programs across the province do not have staff in place to provide programs mandatory under the Health Protection and Promotion Act. It says that all food safety, immunization tracking and Healthy Babies programs in Toronto have been suspended. It goes on to say that in the event of a major disaster in Toronto, the Ontario health system would have been brought to its knees.

You just stood up and started spouting a whole bunch of numbers to the public. What really matters is that we have told you repeatedly that you fired scientists in laboratories that we've needed, that you have cut funding to public health so that they cannot do their mandatory programs, and now the proof in the document submission is that your cabinet knew it. Minister, will you stand in your place today and admit finally that you have had a hand in our not being able to cope with this SARS outbreak?

Hon Mr Clement: No, I wouldn't do that, because that would not be true. I would say to the honourable member that of course we are aware that in the midst of the emergency that is SARS, public health officials in some public health agencies did, for a period of time, take employees off other programs to work on the SARS emergency. That has been a matter of public record that has been confirmed by Sheela Basrur as well as other public health officials. So the great revelation that the honourable member refers to is in fact no revelation at

all. It is a fact that that occurred, and that was the right thing to do. When you're dealing with a public health emergency, you do take resources temporarily from other areas in order to deal with the emergency. Our job, on behalf of the government of Ontario, is to ensure that we have the right responses for the future, the right resources for the future, the right officials for the future, and nurses, doctors and other medical professionals for the future, so that we can be even better—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up. Final supplementary.

Ms Papatello: I need to remind this minister of something this House should never forget, and that is, in 1996 your government's cabinet was presented with business plans for how ministries were going to operate under your new normal for funding of ministries, and it meant cuts. So you may want to talk about increases, but it is well after you significantly cut public health units in this province. When they received this submission for the Ministry of the Environment, it resulted in and is linked through the inquiry recommendations to those deaths in Walkerton.

I am telling you today that we have a copy of the cabinet submission. In the submission that you brought to your cabinet colleagues, it tells us clearly that our system is not able to cope with the SARS outbreak. It is not able to cope with everything else when an outbreak is going on. It suggests to us that all other programs under public health have been suspended because of their pursuit in trying to deal with SARS.

Minister, we have had over 30 people die in this province. You didn't learn the lesson from Walkerton when your cabinet was given information about what happens when you cut ministries. Will we see this happen again or will you finally take action to see that our system is secure?

Hon Mr Clement: We have done more than the rhetoric that the honourable member is espousing here in the House. We've actually acted. Premier Eves—and I was very proud of him when he did this—announced \$720 million of SARS-related funding to the hospitals, to health workers, to public health, for the future of public health, for a better public health system for the province in the wake of some lessons that we have learned together. I don't think anybody is trying to avoid that issue. We're actually dealing with the issue head-on. We acted.

If the honourable member really wants to be helpful in this House, I have another copy of a letter directed to the Prime Minister of Canada. I'm signing it right now. There is a signature line for Tony Clement and there is a signature line for Dalton McGuinty, Leader of the Opposition. If a page could come here right now, I'd be happy to present that to Mrs Papatello so she can send it to her leader. If he wants to be helpful, if you want to be helpful, sign the letter now. Sign it now, be helpful. Be helpful for the people of Ontario; be helpful for the future of this province.

The Speaker: I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): My question is for the Deputy Premier. It's a short question and it could get a short answer. Does the Ernie Eves government stand 100% behind the actions and judgment of Minister Stockwell?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I think the member knows that the issue of Mr Stockwell and his expenses has been referred to the Integrity Commissioner by Mr Stockwell.

Mr Bryant: The Deputy Premier could have said yes, that the government is going to defend, and she didn't. Yet you continue to let this persist. I say that you need to start listening to the voices of Ontarians, who have said that this obstinate defence of this minister is the wrong thing for the government of Ontario to do.

In the Globe and Mail today the same editorial board that endorsed the PC government in 1999 called for Minister Stockwell's resignation not only from cabinet but from the House. The Toronto Star said that either Minister Stockwell should resign or Ernie Eves should fire him. The National Post columnist said that Minister Stockwell's story just doesn't wash. The Globe and Mail columnist said that Ernie Eves is leaving the minister twisting in the wind and that in fact his behaviour is defenceless.

It is defenceless, Minister. It is defenceless, I say to the Deputy Premier. Why do you continue to defend it? Either Premier Ernie Eves is lowering his standards to avoid the embarrassment of the resignation of a frontbencher or in fact the Premier's standards are just as low as Minister Stockwell's.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I would just repeat what I said before. The minister has referred this to the Integrity Commissioner and I understand that the Integrity Commissioner will be making a ruling on this issue.

Mr Bryant: I think the dismissal of this matter and the refusal to either defend the minister or have some action is simply unacceptable. I say to you, you've got to listen to not only the voices in this Legislature but also the voices of some representatives and stakeholders who, frankly, have been your traditional allies. Consider the call from John Williamson, the Ontario director of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. He said the minister should step down and if he doesn't step down, the Premier should ask for his resignation. This, from the Canadian Taxpayers Federation.

It's not just the official opposition that is calling for this minister's resignation; it is also from voices that can hardly be accused of being your traditional foes. The voices are piling up, and I know that members are hearing in their community that the culpable judgment that has been exercised here by this minister and the mortal wound to his credibility that has been struck by the change in the versions of his story demands his resignation. The people have had enough of this. It is time for the government to act. It is time for the government to call for the resignation of this minister now.

1400

Hon Mrs Witmer: The minister has referred this to the Integrity Commissioner, and as the member opposite knows, there is a process in place. I understand that the independent Integrity Commissioner will be making a ruling on this particular situation.

HEALTH CARE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Health. You say you do not have a copy of your own government's cabinet submission. What a surprise. Everyone else in the building seems to have one.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I have one.

Mr Hampton: Oh, you have one now. Minister, I refer you to page 4 of this document, where it talks about the impact of SARS. I'll just read a couple of the quotes. For example, "Wait times for cancer services ... are increasing from 62 days to an anticipated 90 to 100 days." Then it says, "One weekend at Sunnybrook, a 648-bed acute care facility, the trauma unit was closed, the intensive care units were closed, the burn unit serving Toronto was almost closed. In the event of a major disaster in Toronto, the Ontario health system would have been brought to its knees."

Over the past month, we've been raising these exact concerns with you, that health units were having to take staff from one area to fight SARS, that hospitals were having to cannibalize programs, and you denied it all. Minister, why did you deny those things when, in fact, your own cabinet submission says that they were true, they were happening? Why did you deny it?

Hon Mr Clement: I don't know what the honourable member is talking about. I remember attending several press conferences with Cancer Care Ontario as we sought, in the midst of the initial SARS outbreak, to ensure that cancer care patients were looked after within a system—just to remind the honourable member, hospitals in the GTA in the first SARS outbreak were shut down for all elective procedures. This document to which he refers is dated April 29. On April 29, that was the situation, which we at no time denied. In fact, the document that he refers to goes on to say, "In spite of the scale of the challenge, Ontario has coped well." That is because our health care workers, doctors, nurses, medical practitioners, EMS staff and public health officials are doing and were doing their jobs, and we owe them all an applause of thanks for the excellent work that they did and are still doing in the province of Ontario.

Mr Hampton: Those health care workers are indeed doing excellent work out there, no thanks to you and no thanks to your government. In a question that I put to you and the Premier on May 26, I noted that Dr Sheela Basur, one of the heroes, pointed out, "We would try to beg, borrow and steal staff from other health units. It's like ripping the bandage off one wound to stop the

bleeding of another." I referred to cannibalizing one health care program in order to deal with the SARS crisis. At the time, you denied that. You said it wasn't true. You said that people were exaggerating—the same sorts of things that you said about Walkerton. Minister, why did you deny that health units were having to cannibalize programs like food inspection, having to shut down programs like Healthy Babies, having to shut down other health care programs in order to deal with SARS? Why did you deny at the time that that's exactly what was happening out there?

Hon Mr Clement: Speaker, this emergency and then the outbreak has occurred over the space of three months. If the honourable member is talking about a point in time, let's make sure that members in the House know that different things happened on different points in time with respect to this outbreak. I think that's being honest and fair. But if you want to get to this document, why don't you read along with me the short-term action plan and what has been done by this government to make sure that our health care system is operating properly?

"Immediately establish six mobile SARS/infectious disease mobile response teams, rising to 10 teams if required." Done.

"Proceed with the immediate implementation of the integrated public health information system." Done.

"Announce a comprehensive SARS research program and future research on other infectious diseases." Done.

"Establish a staffing stabilization fund to ensure ongoing availability of critical health care staff." Done.

"Establishing 'new normal.'" Done.

If the honourable member wants to keep on asking me questions, I'll keep on answering him, but I think—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

Mr Hampton: Minister, you know what? Your government is very good at making announcements. While 33 people die, while dozens of nurses risk their health, you're very good at making announcements.

Do you know what is really telling about this document? What's really telling on the communications section is this: at a time when people were dying, at a time when nurses couldn't get the equipment they wanted and needed in terms of masks, what was your strategy? Your strategy, the first step being advised by you and your ministry, was, "Reassure the public in Ontario and in fact internationally that Toronto and the GTA are safe." Your whole directive was about communications; it wasn't about continuing the guard, keeping up the guard against SARS; it wasn't about providing nurses and health care workers with the equipment and support they needed. Your whole answer was communications spin.

Minister, here's some communications advice for you. Maybe if you'd been as concerned about containing this virus and protecting the public and health care workers, we wouldn't be facing the second outbreak of SARS. When did communications spin take precedence over protecting the public of Ontario?

Hon Mr Clement: This is patently absurd. If you want to read the document in its entirety so that the peo-

ple of Ontario know that we had at that time worked on an implementation plan which we are now doing or have done—that is much closer to the truth. If the honourable member wants to say it is unsafe to be in Toronto, unsafe to be in Ontario, I want him to stand in his place and say that right now, because that is against the public health information, that is against the evidence of the day, that is against the interests of the hard-working health care workers and the people of Ontario, that is against the interests of Ontario, because it's just not true. That is not what an aspiring Premier should be spreading, either in this place or throughout Ontario. Shame on you, sir, and shame on your caucus.

MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My next question is for the Deputy Premier. When Cam Jackson was expelled from cabinet by the Premier, he claimed it was because Mr Jackson had been less than forthcoming about his lavish steak house expenses, yet your Minister of the Environment has been anything but forthcoming. He has done everything he could possibly do to hide the facts. First, he tried to hide the fact that a private corporation, Ontario Power Generation, paid for his junket to Europe. Then, when that became public knowledge and he was forced to admit it, he tried to say that he paid for all of the personal expenses himself. But then it emerged that that wasn't completely accurate either, that in fact the riding association, complete with a lot of big contributions from corporations that are interested in hydro privatization, had paid for a major portion of his expenses. The minister has been anything but forthcoming. In fact, he makes Mr Jackson look like Honest Abe Lincoln. Why is the Minister of the Environment still in the cabinet when Mr Jackson is sitting on the back bench?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): In response to the question from the leader of the third party, I would just remind him that the issue has been referred to the Integrity Commissioner and that no doubt we all await the recommendation and the outcome of that investigation.

1410

Mr Hampton: You and the Premier have to set some standards, Deputy Premier. You can't say that it's all the Integrity Commissioner's fault. Either you have standards or you don't.

Last summer, when your government's privatization and deregulation of hydroelectricity was sending hydro rates skyrocketing through the roof across the province, the then Minister of Energy, now Minister of the Environment, was traipsing across Europe on a junket paid for by one private hydro corporation and by a whole lot of individuals who were interested in hydro privatization because they wanted to make a lot of money out of it.

Since then, he has done everything he could to avoid being straightforward. He has tried to hide these facts.

When Mr Jackson did that, he lost his job. Why is the Minister of the Environment still in cabinet when he hasn't been forthcoming, when he hasn't been straightforward, when he has tried to hide the truth?

Hon Mrs Witmer: As the leader of the third party knows, there is a process in place, and the process involves asking the Integrity Commissioner, who is an independent official, to take a look at this particular issue. He's doing that, and I know we all await his recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): New question.

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): To the Deputy Premier: I would say to the minister that I've got a pretty good sense of the answer you want to give, but in this one I might give you an opportunity to actually answer the question that's asked.

We know the matter has been referred to the Integrity Commissioner. That's the very narrow matter of Mr Stockwell's use of OPG to cover his expenses. Madam Minister, I know you're trying to pretend you can't hear this, but the real matter at stake is Mr Stockwell's conduct, because over the past week or two he's demonstrated a capacity to tell a story that keeps on changing to suit his need of the moment. I'd ask you to stand in your place and answer this question, Madam Minister: is the conduct of Chris Stockwell, the Minister of the Environment and government House leader, at a standard, at a level that is satisfactory for the standards that Ernie Eves sets for being in his cabinet?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I think it's extremely important that we remain respectful of one another in this House. Everybody is endeavouring to do the best job they can. I would simply remind the member opposite that this issue regarding Mr Stockwell has been referred to the Integrity Commissioner.

Mr Smitherman: Madam Deputy Premier, before you give me lectures on how to treat people, why don't you stand in your place and tell us why you're prepared to defend the actions of a minister who has demonstrated over the past week or two a willingness to say whatever he thinks will work for him at that moment, whether it's the truth or not? Why don't you stand in your place and defend those standards, Madam Minister?

The Speaker: I'm afraid he's going to have to withdraw saying "whether it's the truth or not."

Mr Smitherman: I will not, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: I'll give you one more chance to do it.

Mr Smitherman was escorted from the chamber.

The Speaker: Just so we're clear, if people didn't hear it, I want it to be clear. He was named and was asked to leave the chamber. The Deputy Premier.

Hon Mrs Witmer: Mr Speaker, I have no further comment.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): My question is to the Minister of Finance and it has to do with the skyrocketing rates for auto insurance. Not only in Ontario

but across Canada and around the world have people experienced these huge increases. I've been hearing a lot from my constituents, I'm sure every member in this House has heard from their constituents, about the skyrocketing costs of their insurance. I'd like to know what we are doing as a government to protect these people. They are becoming rather impatient about what this government is doing to help consumers, in particular seniors on fixed incomes who rely on their automobiles for their independence.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): I'd like to thank the MPP for Burlington for an extremely important question. He advocates very strongly on behalf of his constituents.

We certainly share the concern about the cost pressures that consumers are facing in the auto insurance area. For example, we took action shortly after we came into government some years ago. With Bill 59 we were actually able to reduce premiums by some 12% for consumers.

It is clear that despite that progress, more work needs to be done. That's why in my budget last spring I launched a process to do precisely that, to make sure we could take steps for better access to treatment for consumers, for example; to deal with some of the fraud and misuse that had crept back into the system; to also make administrative procedure improvements that would help manage the cost. So far we've taken a number of steps to do that. We've removed mandatory pre-inspection insurance inspections. We're phasing out the retail sales tax on auto insurance premiums and some other steps—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The minister's time is up. Supplementary.

Mr Jackson: Minister, all of what we've done up to this point isn't helping a couple of my constituents. On Friday, I met with—

Applause.

The Speaker: If you agree with the member, I'm sure you will let him ask the question. He does have the floor. I will give you your time. Sorry for the interruption, member for Burlington.

Mr Jackson: On Friday, I was at a ceremony for veterans marking D-Day. We went back to the legion afterwards, and a couple of them approached me about some of their concerns. One in particular is a veteran, and on the 22nd of this month his insurance with Allstate is going to go up by 300%. This man has never had a speeding ticket in his lifetime. I just want you to know for the record that there are a large number of people out there who are experiencing these kinds of rates. I'm asking, how soon will you be bringing forward remedies so that consumers are protected in this province?

Hon Mrs Ecker: He raises some very valid points about the pressures consumers are facing. There are some significant questions about the underwriting rules that are being used. That's one of the things the superintendent of insurance is looking at. As you know, the regulator approves rate increases and has been diligent to try to make sure the information that is there is accurate.

In the meantime, we're bringing forward regulations that are going to expand the legal rights of innocent victims to sue for damages in excess of the no-fault benefits; to expand the right to sue for damages for children; to make sure there is faster treatment being provided to consumers; and to improve many of the administrative procedures, not only to benefit the consumers but to help stabilize the rates. There will be more action taken as we work with all the stakeholders, including advocates on behalf of consumers to make sure auto insurance here in this province is indeed—

The Speaker: Your time is up. New question.

MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): My question is to the energy minister. It's about the OPG expenses involved with Minister Stockwell. My question is this: what about the land yacht? What about the ground transportation used by Minister Stockwell that was expensed by Ontario Power Generation? What was this, a fleet of cars, Winnebagos, limos, drivers? What was expensed and paid for by Ontario Power Generation?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs): When this issue was written about in the media, the first thing the Minister of the Environment did was pick up the telephone to contact the Honourable Justice Coulter Osborne to ask Justice Osborne to look into the matter. We have a tremendous amount of confidence in Justice Osborne and his capacity to conduct an inquiry and review of this issue.

Mr Bryant: This is becoming pretty clear. The Deputy Premier won't defend the minister. The energy minister won't defend the former energy minister. We're asking some questions about the standards of this government, and this government has no response and refuses to defend the minister. This silence and this refusal to defend the defenceless actions and judgment of this minister speaks volumes. So does the refusal to provide the exact amount that Ontario Power Generation expensed. This is not your money, Minister. This is not Ontario Power Generation's money. This is the people's money. The people have a right to know. Was it \$5,000, was it \$10,000? Ten thousand dollars is twice \$5,000. This is a pretty huge discrepancy. I do not understand. The people of Ontario have no idea why you won't release these expenses. Why won't you pick up the phone and tell Ontario Power Generation to release these expenses? There's absolutely no reason for not releasing these expenses.

I ask you again, and I'm sure I'm going to get no answer again, and it will speak volumes: how did OPG expense, what was it for, and when are you going to release the expenses?

1420

Hon Mr Baird: I know the Minister of the Environment, the government House leader, to be an honourable, decent and hard-working individual. To his credit, the

minute a question or concern was raised to the minister in question, he did the honourable and decent thing and picked up the phone and contacted the office of the Integrity Commissioner, Justice Coulter Osborne. What the honourable member opposite wants to conduct—he wants to be the judge, jury and executioner. Rather than you conducting an inquiry review on the floor of the Legislature or on television, we believe that the former Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of Ontario is the best person to conduct such a review.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. As you know, in the communities of Burlington and Halton, both my colleague the member for Halton and I have expressed concern about the planned mid-peninsula corridor and its treatment going through the Halton region. We have specifically met with CONE and with COPE, Citizens Opposed to Paving the Escarpment. We agree with many of the points they have raised about the process, and as you know, our city has expressed concern about the manner in which we're proceeding. My question is this: have we exhausted every opportunity in order to ensure that we've fully explored opportunities for alternate transit corridors, as well as full consideration of the environmental impacts, before we proceed for an environmental assessment on this site?

Hon Frank Klees (Minister of Transportation): The member of Burlington has indeed been a strong advocate for his community on this issue, along with the member for Halton. I want to confirm for him as well as for the House that the initial needs assessments study that's been done for the mid-peninsula corridor has in fact already examined numerous options, including an expanded transit rail, bus, the widening of the QEW and maintenance of a corridor and other roadway improvements. The ministry has held extensive consultations with the public. We have conducted some 15 information centres and three additional public workshops. So there has been extensive opportunity for input.

Having said that, we continue to work with the city of Burlington. In fact, my staff met with the city of Burlington staff and we've agreed to incorporate a number of additional terms into the terms of reference for the upcoming environmental assessment. We want to ensure that we address all of the environmental—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is over.

Mr Jackson: There's clear evidence that there's been some movement on the part of the government. However, these concerns still remain. The city has a resolution from its council and from its region that they will be suing the province if they do not get resolutions to these issues. The deadline is in 48 hours.

I want to thank the minister for facilitating those meetings that we requested in order to try and resolve matters. But it would appear that one of the major

stumbling blocks is an issue I still have not received a satisfactory answer to, and that has to do with the fact that a reasonable request has been to separate the environmental assessments: do one for the Niagara corridor through to the Hamilton airport, which makes sense—there's unanimity on that—and then have a separate EA to separate the two.

We're led to believe that the federal government refuses to allow that to happen. I'm getting conflicting reports about that and I want the minister's assurance that he has explored every opportunity so that we can avoid the lawsuit, which is unnecessary, and still achieve the goals of citizens of Burlington and Halton, who want to ensure that this highway does not carve through the most beautiful escarpment anywhere in North America.

Hon Mr Klees: I want to assure the member that we too want to do whatever we can to ensure that there are no unintended consequences, either to the environment or in any way to this area. We have, as a result of the discussions with representatives from Burlington—and the member should know this—agreed to incorporate a number of additional issues into the environmental assessment. We have agreed for a special study for the Niagara Escarpment to be included in that environmental assessment process.

At the end of the day, whether the city of Burlington decides they want to proceed with legal action on this is, of course, up to them. We would hope that they would understand that it's much better that we work together on this. We want to work with the city of Burlington, all of the stakeholders, to ensure, first of all, that the environmental issues are addressed and that we deal with what is clearly a need for a new corridor through this important area. Economic reasons are there. The member knows—

The Speaker: I'm afraid the member's time is up.

PICKERING NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): A question for the Minister of Energy: your date for the restart of the Pickering A nuclear generating station changes as often Mr Stockwell changes his story about his expense account. OPG said a while ago that Pickering A would be up and running in June. Then it was forced to admit that it wouldn't happen until the end of July. Now the chief nuclear operations officer says that that schedule is "obviously tight." We know what that means. That's code for, "It won't happen in July either." In fact, when I talk to the workers who are working on Pickering A, they say it will be until October before it produces one megawatt of power.

I'm asking you today, will you admit to the people of Ontario that Pickering A nuclear generating station won't be up and running in July either, will it?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs): The direction that this government has given to Ontario Power Generation is to ensure that the plant, both at Pickering B and in the

refurbishment work done to Pickering A, be done in a safe and appropriate manner, that they follow all the environmental and all the regulatory rules that are in place. It's not an area on which we could cut corners, and we're not prepared to do that.

Having said that, I'm the first to acknowledge that this project is both over budget and behind schedule. We have appointed a group of three outstanding individuals who bring a terrific amount of experience to the task to review this initiative and give advice to the government and the people of the province of Ontario.

Mr Hampton: In the words of doublespeak, I think we heard the admission from the minister that it's not going to happen in July either.

You mention your review. That is puzzling as well, because seven months ago the Premier said this review was going to happen right away. It took seven months to name the people who were going to conduct the review, but, surprisingly, we still can't find any terms of reference for this review. You have named the people, but you still haven't spelled out for the public what the terms of reference of the review will be.

This is important for the people of Ontario. People are worried that skyrocketing hydro prices will close down more mills, more mines, more factories and result in more layoffs. People are worried about brownouts or blackouts.

After seven and a half months, when is your Pickering review team going to get its terms of reference? After the election, maybe?

Hon Mr Baird: The three-member panel has already begun its work. It's looking at the reasons and the reasonableness with respect to both the cost and the timeline of the project. They're obviously concerned that they have a substantial mandate to look at all aspects of the project, whether it's management, whether it's contractual issues, procurement issues, engineering issues, relations with contractors, environmental concerns. We want to know both the reasons and the reasonableness with respect to the delay and cost overruns at the project.

MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Deputy Premier and has to do with the Minister of the Environment's episode. For many people, the key issue is that the minister said one thing, and then the evidence seemed to indicate something quite different. He indicated that a particular reporter made up quotations. We then find that there was actually a recording of it, and the reporter accurately reported Mr Stockwell's comments.

1430

The same reporter asked, "Did you take your family?" The minister said, "I paid my own hotel expenditures. They paid their own way. I paid them personally." We subsequently found out that wasn't the case and that it was actually the riding association.

My question is, is this part of what the Integrity Commissioner will be looking at? Will the Integrity Commissioner be commenting on the quotes of Mr Stockwell?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I appreciate the question from the member opposite. All I can tell him is that according to the minister and the information I have, the matter has been referred to the Integrity Commissioner. I have no further information.

Mr Phillips: As I say, to many, and certainly to the people I talk with in the public, this is the issue: it's the minister saying one thing and the facts contradicting the minister. That's what I think people want to know.

I ask you again, Minister: if you have not determined whether that is part of the Integrity Commissioner's responsibility, will you, on behalf of the Premier, undertake that you, on behalf of the government, will look at this issue quite separately from the Integrity Commissioner?

Hon Mrs Witmer: At this point in time, the only information I have is the fact that the minister has indicated that he has referred this matter as such to the independent Integrity Commissioner. Obviously, there will be a decision rendered based on that, and then the Minister of the Environment will release that decision publicly.

SARS

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, I understand that the federal government made an announcement this week of \$5 million toward research for SARS. This is in addition to some of their previous announcements for SARS, most notably last Friday's announcement of \$13.5 million for Toronto. While this is most welcome, I understand that you and Minister Young raised some very urgent concerns last Friday about a more solid financial commitment from the federal government.

It is my understanding that the real costs of SARS are quite significant and are continuously growing. The ground fight is the most important part of this emergency at this point to ensure that Ontarians stay safe from SARS.

Minister, could you remind us how this government has taken a lead in providing support for this ground fight and about your call for more support from the Liberal government?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I thank the honourable member for the very timely question. Indeed, just last week, pursuant to the resolution that passed in this House and which was opposed by the provincial Liberals, Minister Young and I did call upon the federal government to immediately commit to the people of Ontario by coming through on the resources we need to continue to fight SARS.

We know that there are staggering costs. We are facing those costs as a provincial government, but we need our partner, the federal government. Despite the fact

that the provincial Liberals indicated they did not think this was important by voting against the resolution of this House, we do believe that it is important for the federal government to be part of the solution. Emergency items like masks, gowns, goggles, gloves and other equipment and medicines to treat our patients do have a price, and if the federal government is not part of the solution, it is simply part of the problem.

I can only agree with Art Eggleton when he says that we are no less deserving of that kind of federal assistance than they were in Manitoba or with the ice storm. I agree with Art Eggleton. Why don't the opposition agree with a federal Liberal MP?

Ms Mushinski: Thank you for that response. One would assume that in an emergency such as this, all levels of government would be stepping up to the plate and going beyond existing program supports to help out. As Minister Clement just indicated, action is needed immediately.

I was discouraged to read in the National Post on Saturday that a spokesperson from Minister McCallum's office suggested that "waiting a couple of weeks is not going to break the bank in Ontario." Well, from what Minister Clement has indicated, this issue is of extremely urgent concern.

Why is it that the Liberals' provincial cousins here across the House should be committing to the same campaign for federal support? Frankly, they have not shown the kind of support or leadership that we need in this emergency. Can the minister expand on these concerns?

Hon Mr Clement: Thank you again for the question. I'll say it again: it's time for the federal government to make a strong commitment to our team here in Ontario to overcome SARS, to recognize the situation and to act now—not tomorrow, not next week, not next month, but today. That is the leadership that we expect from the federal government.

I passed along to the deputy leader of the Ontario Liberal Party a letter to be signed by Dalton McGuinty, signed by me already, calling upon the Prime Minister to step up to the plate for the people of Ontario. I ask the honourable deputy leader of the official opposition, have you signed the letter yet? Are you part of the solution, or are you still part of the problem?

DWARF-TOSSING

Ms Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): My question is for the Minister of Public Safety. Minister, I realize that this is a new issue, and I appreciate your willingness to have this discussion around my private member's bill, which I introduced a little earlier, to ban so-called dwarf-tossing in Ontario. It is banned in other jurisdictions.

It's hard to imagine that we have to address this in this House and in this province, but in fact there is a function happening in my riding this evening that includes dwarf-tossing. My community is upset. They are up in arms. I have received a torrent of phone calls from people who

would dearly like this to stop. I agree with these people. I know that in speaking with the minister just before this question, he and I are of the same mind. I hope that together we can find a way to stop this event.

The minister has expressed that there are issues, and I realize that the bill is controversial and that he isn't in a position to have the private member's bill passed by the end of the day today, where it could receive royal assent and become law. Would the Minister of Public Safety be prepared to review all manners possible to have this event stopped this evening?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Public Safety and Security): As the member opposite indicated, I was just made aware of this about half an hour ago, and I certainly share her concern and the concern of her community. I suspect it's a concern that would be shared by most caring Ontarians. This is clearly a very demeaning activity, taking advantage of the less fortunate people in society for profit. Indeed, if there is a way that we can act to stop this activity, short-term and long-term, I'm certainly prepared to look at every possible avenue to do that.

Ms Pupatello: Minister, I want to say that in the past all three parties have been able to work in concert. I've appreciated the support we've received, both from the NDP House leader, the House leader of my own party and certainly the former Attorney General. We understand that the lawyers have looked at my bill so that they can understand where the controversy may lie. May I also tell the minister that there are other jurisdictions around the world that do ban this activity, that it can be done? That it is long-term and something that perhaps we can't do by the end of the day today, I appreciate that.

I also appreciate the opportunity that the minister will have between now and the end of the day today to find a manner to launch an investigation, some kind of probe, and while that investigation is happening, we can stop the event this evening. That is our initial target, and we hope that in the coming days we'll be able to get over the hurdles and see how other jurisdictions have implemented a ban so that we don't have to deal with these kinds of events again.

I agree with the minister that these are the kinds of events that ought not to be happening in this province, and I appreciate the support that we have had from all three parties since 11 am this morning, when we began our attempt to stop the event.

Hon Mr Runciman: I applaud the member. I think she has been exploring all possible avenues to deal with the situation, and she has advised me that she has contacted the Ontario Human Rights Commission and referenced the other jurisdictions. I was given a note that indeed the state of Florida and the country of France have both outlawed this activity, and apparently all of these decisions are being appealed because there are individuals who are arguing that their livelihood is dependent on their ability to participate in this activity.

I have already asked officials in the ministry to review that legislation. I know the member opposite appreciates

that I do not direct the police in terms of their activities, but we are very actively exploring ways that we can have some role in eliminating this kind of activity from Ontario.

1440

HEALTH CARE

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. In my riding of Waterloo-Wellington, access to excellent health care is an absolute priority for my constituents and for me as their member.

That is the message I received last Friday at a barbeque in Linwood, which was organized by the township of Wellesley to raise money to make improvements to the building that will house the office of their new nurse practitioner. The nurse practitioner that the minister announced some time ago is a very welcome addition to health care in that community.

The province's support is appreciated, and the people who live in Wellesley township are certainly doing their part to contribute to improving their health care. However, the people at that event wanted to know that the provincial government will continue to do everything it can to improve access to health care where they need it.

With that support in mind, I want to ask the minister: will he outline what the government is doing and what it plans to do in the future to further improve access to health care, especially in rural Ontario?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Of course we are in absolute agreement with the member's point; namely, that quality health care and the economic vitality, if I may say so, of a community begin with accessibility to quality health services when they need them, as close to home as possible. That's got to be a hallmark of our system, and as a consequence it's a top priority for this government.

I can tell the honourable member that we have acknowledged the important role, for instance, that nurse practitioners can play in underserved areas and servicing rural communities. Since 1998, we have introduced well over 200 nurse practitioners in the province, in particular in underserved areas.

We also have an underserved areas program where we offer incentive grants of \$15,000 over four years for general and family practitioners who want to relocate to these communities. We'll also pay for the tuition of medical students who are offering the same. I think it's a very important program—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up. Supplementary?

Mr Arnott: I thank the minister for his answer. I'm sure he's aware that the township of Wellesley hopes to be moving forward shortly with further plans to improve access to health care. The township council and staff are working with me and the government of Ontario to establish a health care facility to better serve the health care needs of the people of Wellesley township. Their

plan, which I have endorsed, is to open a community health centre in the township of Wellesley that will operate as a satellite of the Woolwich Community Health Centre.

I want to thank the minister very much for meeting with representatives of the Woolwich Community Health Centre and the township of Wellesley on April 22. I appreciate the fact that my constituents were given an opportunity to meet the minister and provide him with an outline of their proposal. I wholeheartedly support this proposal, and I believe the minister would want to support it as well.

Will the minister provide the needed approval and funding required to proceed with this new facility in Wellesley township?

Interjections.

Hon Mr Clement: I want to assure the honourable members opposite that he has thanked me before today for having the meeting. In fact, it was a great meeting, and I want those in this chamber, and through them the people of Ontario, to know that indeed I and the Ernie Eves government feel very strongly that our family health networks, our family health groups and our community health centres are absolutely critical as first-point care for multidisciplinary teams of health professionals.

In fact, I did have the meeting, to which the honourable member referred, on April 22, and I want to say in this House that their presentation was extremely impressive. They made a very sound case, and of course we're taking a very serious look at the proposal. I don't have an announcement to make today in this chamber, but I want to tell the honourable member that I believe his advocacy and the excellent program that was brought to my attention can help us move forward when it comes to primary care in his community and make the right decisions on behalf of his community, as we are seeking to do for the people of Ontario.

LABOUR UNIONS

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a question to the Minister of Labour. Your government has given bosses across Ontario the green light to intimidate, harass, attack and threaten workers who exercise their basic right to form a union.

Today reporters here at Queen's Park heard about a vicious assault on a young man named Cory Mitic. Stand up, Cory. Cory's arm was broken because he was distributing flyers to workers about their legal right to form a union at Matrix Packaging.

You see, Matrix Packaging doesn't want a union, so they used hired goons to beat to beat up young Cory, and they have fired, threatened and intimidated workers who have even dared to talk union.

Minister, your government is the one who ripped all the protections for workers from the Labour Relations Act. You let this happen. What are you going to do about it now?

Hon Brad Clark (Minister of Labour): First off, every member in this House would share my concern and the government's concern whenever there's any violence in the workplace. But I take great exception to what the member opposite is stating in terms of what we're enforcing and what we're not enforcing.

The law states, under the Labour Relations Act, that no employer shall refuse employment, impose any condition in a contract, or seek by threat of dismissal, to dissuade an employee from seeking to become a member of a trade union, or to exercise any other rights under the Labour Relations Act. It further states that the Labour Relations Board may authorize a labour relations officer to inquire into any complaint about any contravention of the act and order a remedy under the act. That is the law.

For you to come into this place and tell us that we're not standing up for workers rights is preposterous. There have been, in this government, in the last two years, 927 certifications of unions one year ago, and last year, 686. For you to state that there are no unions being certified, for you to state that we're not willing to stand up for workers in this place is absolutely political—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The minister's time is up.

Mr Kormos: Minister, what I'm tell you is that it's boss thugs who beat the hell out of Cory and broke his arm and roughed up a young woman who was with him at that same information picket. What I'm telling you is that it's your government's approach to labour relations that's been a gift to every thug and hooligan who makes money in this province busting unions.

In Chatham, Don Milner, father of two, was run over and seriously injured on a picket line at Navistar by a truck full of scabs—your scabs. In Toronto, APA Precision recruited two gang members who posed as workers at the plant, then made threats, including death threats, to discourage workers from voting union. And Cory Mitic is here today with a broken arm because your government has thrown out the welcome mat for scabs, union busters, hired goons and other thugs who earn their pay by busting unions and breaking up union drives—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister, I'll make those decisions, and quit yelling at the Speaker or I'll throw you out. Sorry, I interrupted the member for Niagara Centre.

Failure of sound system.

The Speaker: The Minister of Labour.

Hon Mr Clark: It's not unusual for the member opposite to bring in these accusations and then find out after the fact that he's completely wrong. Not too long ago, he stood in this House and said that this government was forcing employees to work overtime hours when in fact it was our employment standard officers who went to the company and said, "You can't do that."

We enforce the law. The law is very clear here. Employers cannot do what you are claiming they did. The individual in this particular situation has gone to the police. The police are investigating the alleged crime. The unions themselves are using the law and going to the

labour relations board. That's where this belongs. It doesn't belong on the floor of this House with your pathetic political posturing for advantages because an election is coming. It belongs before the labour relations board. That's where it belongs.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a question for the Deputy Premier. Over the past several months your government has been engaged in a virtual orgy of self-gratulatory, blatantly partisan advertising that, I think, anybody in this province would recognize as being that. You have sent glossy pamphlets with a partisan government message to every household in Ontario. You're advertising on television, on radio, in newspapers, in magazines, with a 30-page glossy insert in Maclean's magazine. You have huge signs on the highway with "Building Ontario Together: Ernie Eves, Premier."

You have, in other words, been abusing the taxpayers of this province and abusing public office and, some people might suggest, potentially cheating in an upcoming election.

Minister, I ask you this question. I provided for you this morning—

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: the honourable member is accusing the government of potentially trying to cheat in an election campaign. I think that's unparliamentary and you should ask him to withdraw.

1450

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I would ask the member to kindly watch his language.

Mr Bradley: I will watch my language. To the member, I think I said that I have had people saying to me that that is the case. I did not say it. Anyway, my question—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Come to order. We're down to the last few minutes. I'm not going to put up with it in the last minutes. If you want to be booted out, let me know now. We'll throw you out of here. We're down to the last minutes and I'm not going to put up with it. Go ahead, the member for St Catharines.

Mr Bradley: I ask the Deputy Premier, who's been a long-time member of this House, why on earth would you and your colleagues not support the bill I brought before the Legislature this morning that would take this kind of advertising out of the hands of governments—in other words, partisan governments—and give it to an independent source, which in this case is the Provincial Auditor, to vet that advertising to ensure all information provided by government is indeed non-partisan and not self-congratulatory? It's a great opportunity. Why would you not support that?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I thank the member for the question. I'm

going to refer it to the Chair of Management Board, who's responsible for advertising.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture): I will put some context on this first. The average spending per year while the Liberal government was in power was \$80.1 million. The average spending per year for the NDP was \$70.1 million. The average spending per year for the PCs is \$63.9 million. The Liberals are the leader in this area.

I will say to the member over there that part of his bill he wants to introduce is to not have the images of ministers in advertising. However, that's a little bit disingenuous because certainly when he was the Minister for the Environment, he made sure his picture appeared on advertisements. So I guess it's, "Do as I say, not as I do."

LEGISLATIVE INTERNS

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Some members will know it is the last day for our fine group of interns. They will actually be here, but they will not be here during the final weeks; they will be in other activities. On behalf of all the members, I want to thank the interns for their fine work. I'm sure we'll see many of them back in other capacities, as we always have with that fine internship program.

VISITOR

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs): I'm pleased to recognize the presence in the gallery, all the way from Windsor, Ontario, of Mark Reimer, who is with us today.

I'd also like to table with the Clerk the terms of reference for the Pickering A review.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs): Pursuant to standing order 55, here is the business of the House for next week:

Monday afternoon we will debate the great bill on the Ontario Energy Board reform, Bill 23. That's a great bill that Mike Fogarty worked on. Monday evening we will continue debate on Bill 53.

Tuesday afternoon we will again debate Bill 53. Tuesday evening we will debate Bill 23, the great Ontario Energy Board reform bill.

Wednesday afternoon, what will we debate? Bill 23, the energy board reform bill.

Thursday morning, during private members' public business, we will discuss ballot item 15, standing in the name of Mr Beaubien, and ballot item 16, standing in the name of Mr Cordiano. Thursday afternoon's business is to be announced.

PETITIONS

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Eves government has increased the fees paid by seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities by 15%, or \$7.02 per diem, effective August 1, 2002; and

"Whereas this fee increase will cost seniors and our most vulnerable more than \$200 a month; and

"Whereas this increase is 11.1% above the rent increase guidelines for tenants in the province of Ontario and;

"Whereas the increase in the government's own contribution to raise the level of long-term-care services this year is less than \$2 per resident per day; and

"Whereas according to the government's own funded study, Ontario ranks last amongst comparable jurisdictions"—last—"in the amount of time provided to a resident for nursing and personal care; and

"Whereas the long-term-care funding partnership has been based on government accepting the responsibility to fund the care and services that residents need; and

"Whereas government needs to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$750 million over the next three years to raise the level of service for Ontario's long-term-care residents to those in Saskatchewan in 1999; and

"Whereas this province has been built by seniors who should be able to live out their lives with dignity, respect and in comfort in this province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We demand that Premier Eves reduce his 15% fee increase on seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities and increase provincial government support for nursing and personal care to adequate levels."

I affix my signature. I'm in complete agreement.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): This petition is entitled "Scrap the Long-Term-Care Fee Increase." It reads:

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Conservative government increased fees paid by Ontario seniors and other vulnerable people living in long-term-care facilities by 15%, or \$213 a month, instead of providing adequate government funding for long-term care; and

"Whereas the Conservative government has therefore shifted the cost of long-term care on to the backs of the frail elderly and their families; and

"Whereas this increase is 11.1% above the rent increase guidelines for tenants in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas in 1996 Ontario abandoned its minimum requirement of 2.25 hours of nursing care per nursing home resident; and

"Whereas the government's own contribution to raise the level of long-term-care services this year is less than \$2 per resident per day; and

"Whereas according to the government's own study, government cutbacks have resulted in Ontario seniors receiving just 14 minutes a day of care from a registered nurse—less than half the time given to residents in Saskatchewan; and

"Whereas the report also found that Ontario residents receive the least nursing, bathing and general care of nine other comparable locations;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Join the Ontario New Democratic Party in demanding the Conservative government eliminate the 15% fee increase for residents of long-term-care facilities, increase the number of nursing care hours for each resident to a minimum of 3.5 hours per day, and provide stable, increased funding to ensure quality care is there for Ontario residents of long-term-care facilities."

I completely support this petition and will sign it.

HOME CARE

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas well-managed and adequately funded home health care is a growing need in our community; and

"Whereas the provincial government has frozen community care access centre budgets, which has meant dramatic cuts to service agency funding and services to vulnerable citizens, as well as shortened visits by front-line workers; and

"Whereas these dramatic cuts, combined with the increased complexity of care for those who do qualify for home care, has led to an impossible cost burden to home care agencies; and

"Whereas the wages and benefits received by home care workers employed by home care agencies are well below the wages and benefits of workers doing comparable jobs in institutional settings; and

"Whereas front-line staff are also required to subsidize the home care program in our community by being responsible for paying for their own gas and for vehicle maintenance; and

"Whereas other CCACs and CCAC-funded agencies across the province compensate their staff between 29 cents and 42.7 cents per kilometre; and

"Whereas CCAC-funded agency staff in our community are paid 26 cents a kilometre, with driving time considered 'hours worked';

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To act now to increase funding to the CCAC of Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington in order for

it to adequately fund service agencies so they can fairly compensate front-line workers.”

I will affix my signature to this petition, because I am in full agreement.

1500

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): This petition reads:

“Whereas the Progressive Conservative government promised in 1995 not to cut classroom spending, but has already cut at least \$1 billion from our schools and is now closing many classrooms completely; and

“Whereas international language weekend classes are a needed part of learning for many students in our area; and

“Whereas the Education Act, specifically regulation 285(5), mandates provision of these programs where demand exists; and

“Whereas the Conservative government funding formula is forcing the Toronto District School Board to cancel these Saturday classes for groups who want this programming;

“Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to instruct the Minister of Education to restore meaningful and flexible funding to the Toronto school boards, to ensure that they are able to continue to accommodate these Saturday international languages classes.”

I support this petition. It affects many students in my riding, and I will sign it.

HIGHWAY 407

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario “To Freeze 407 Tolls and Stop Highway Robbery.”

“Whereas the 407 toll highway was financed by the Ontario taxpayer and is owned by the Ontario taxpayer, but leased to an international consortium” with Al Leach as one of the directors “for 99 years; and

“Whereas since Highway 407 has been leased there have been five toll increases in 40 months as high as 300%, including the most recent 12.6% increase coming February 1, 2003, and an outrageous 24% jump levied on motorists without a transponder; and

“Whereas it is totally unfair that commuters will have to pay up to \$4,500 per year in extra tolls to get to work and truckers are charged up to 38 cents per kilometre; and

“Whereas the secret contract signed by the Eves government gives the international operators carte blanche to raise tolls as high as they wish; and

“Whereas the Harris-Eves government promised a cap on toll increases when the highway was leased; and

“Whereas the Eves government has just passed legislation freezing hydro rates to protect consumers;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the province of Ontario freeze Highway 407 toll rates immediately until complete and comprehensive protections are put in place to protect consumers and stop the highway robbery.”

I fully support the 407 commuters. I'll affix my name to this petition.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have another petition on long-term-care fee increases. It reads:

“Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Conservative government increased fees paid by Ontario seniors and other vulnerable people living in long-term-care facilities by 15%, or \$213 a month, instead of providing adequate government funding for long-term care; and

“Whereas the Conservative government has therefore shifted the cost of long-term care on to the backs of the frail elderly and their families; and

“Whereas this increase is 11.1% above the rent increase guidelines for tenants in the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas in 1996 Ontario abandoned its minimum requirement of 2.25 hours of nursing care per nursing home resident; and

“Whereas the government's own contribution to raise the level of long-term-care services this year is less than \$2 per resident per day; and

“Whereas according to the government's own study, government cutbacks have resulted in Ontario seniors receiving just 14 minutes a day of care from a registered nurse—less than half the time given to residents in Saskatchewan; and

“Whereas the report also found that Ontario residents receive the least nursing, bathing and general care of nine other comparable locations;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Join the Ontario New Democratic Party in demanding the Conservative government eliminate the 15% fee increase for residents of long-term-care facilities, increase the number of nursing care hours for each resident to a minimum of 3.5 hours per day, and provide stable, increased funding to ensure quality care is there for Ontario residents of long-term-care facilities.”

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

ALUMINUM SMELTER

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): This petition is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Regarding Cleanup of the Abandoned Smelter Site in Georgina.

“Whereas the abandoned aluminum smelter located on Warden Avenue in the town of Georgina has been

deemed to have heavy metals exceeding the Ministry of the Environment guidelines; and

"Whereas the site is adjacent to a wetland that leads into the Maskinonge River feeding into Lake Simcoe;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Ministry of the Environment to conduct a full environmental assessment of this site followed by a cleanup of the full smelter site."

I affix my signature as I'm in complete agreement.

TRADITION CHINESE MEDICINE AND ACUPUNCTURE

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario in support of the regulation of traditional Chinese medicine and acupuncture.

"Whereas traditional Chinese medicine, TCM, including acupuncture, has been practised successfully for over 5,000 years and has improved the health of billions of people worldwide with an emphasis on prevention and treating the cause of illness and not just the symptoms; and

"Whereas there are thousands of unregulated individuals practising acupuncture and traditional Chinese medicine in Ontario without any regulations, standards of care or professional training requirements; and

"Whereas the failure of the provincial government to protect consumers by regulating TCM/acupuncture places Ontarians at risk because any person can now practise TCM and acupuncture without any qualifications or standards whatsoever; and

"Whereas TCM/acupuncture is regulated in over 40 states in the US and in the provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, Quebec, and these jurisdictions have passed legislation to regulate practitioners of TCM/acupuncture in order to provide safe, effective and high standards of care to the general public; and

"Whereas hundreds of thousands of Ontarians have experienced the benefits of TCM/acupuncture and are culturally linked to traditional Chinese medicine, given the diverse origins of so many Ontarians; and

"Whereas we spend over \$2 billion a month in Ontario on western medical treatment and virtually nothing on preventive, complementary or alternative medical practices such as TCM that not only prevent illness and promote wellness, but also save taxpayers billions of dollars in drug costs and hospital stays;

"We, the undersigned, urge the provincial government of Ontario and all MPPs to pass legislation as soon as possible based on the British Columbia model to allow for the regulation of TCM/acupuncture and establish a college of TCM/acupuncture of Ontario, and set standards of care and training qualifications for practitioners in Ontario so that all Ontarians can safely enjoy all the benefits of TCM/acupuncture from highly qualified and trained practitioners."

I fully support this petition and I'll affix my name to it.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Eves government has increased the fees paid by seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities by 15%, or \$7.02 per day, effective August 1, 2002;

"Whereas this fee increase will cost seniors and our most vulnerable more than \$200 a month; and

"Whereas the increase is 11.1% above the rent increase guidelines for tenants in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the increase in the government's own contribution to raise the level of long-term-care services this year is less than \$2 per resident per day;

"Whereas, according to the government's own funded study, Ontario ranks last among comparable jurisdictions in the amount of time provided to a resident for nursing and personal care; and

"Whereas the long-term-care funding partnership has been based on government accepting the responsibility to fund the care and services that residents need; and

"Whereas the government needs to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$750 million over the next three years to raise the level of service for Ontario's long-term-care residents to those in Saskatchewan in 1999; and

Whereas this province has been built by seniors, who should be able to live out their lives with dignity, respect and in comfort in this province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Demand that Premier Eves reduce his 15% fee increase on seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities and increase provincial government support for nursing and personal care to adequate levels."

I will affix my signature to this petition as I am in full agreement.

1510

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THE RIGHT CHOICES FOR EQUITY IN EDUCATION ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LES BONS CHOIX POUR L'ÉQUITÉ EN MATIÈRE D'ÉDUCATION (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 10, 2003, on the motion for second reading of Bill 53, An Act respecting the equity in education tax credit.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The Chair recognizes the deputy House leader and Minister of Energy.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs): And the Minister responsible for francophone affairs. Monsieur le Président, l'ordre du gouvernement G53.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Orléans-Carleton on a point of order.

Hon Mr Baird: Nepean-Carleton, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Nepean; my error. I'll get better as the day goes on.

Hon Mr Baird: The government deferred its leadoff time the last time this debate was held. I was wondering if I could ask for unanimous consent to go now to the government's leadoff 60-minute speech.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there consent? It is agreed.

The Chair recognizes the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant.

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): Thank you, Speaker, and I appreciate people agreeing for us to go ahead with this debate. We're debating Bill 53, the Right Choices for Equity in Education Act, also commonly known as the education tax credit act. I'll be sharing my time with MPP Frank Klees, member for Oak Ridges, and MPP Raminder Gill, member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale.

It's been over eight years now that I've been speaking to so many parents who want a better arrangement to send their children to independent schools. They've told me they want their children educated in their own culture and in their own religion. However, they find the cost of sending their children to such independent schools prohibitive. In my riding of Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, these people are friends and neighbours. I know these people and have had many conversations, at the door or in backyards, with people who skimp and sacrifice so that they may be able to provide a spiritually based education for their kids. You know, these parents pay twice—they pay through their taxes and through tuition fees—to get their children the kind of education that they feel is in the best interests of the family and their children.

Across Ontario there are over 700 independent schools. There are seven schools in my riding. Of the 2.1 million students currently—

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I don't believe we have a quorum for this debate.

The Deputy Speaker: Would you like me to check and find out for sure?

Ms Churley: Yes, Mr Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Could you see if there is a quorum present, please?

Deputy Clerk (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Deputy Clerk: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant.

Mr Barrett: I was talking about the 700 independent schools across the province. That represents 100,000 students enrolled in independent denominational and

nondenominational schools. A lot of these students are in Oxford county, my neighbouring county, and I will say that that's 100,000 students out of 2.1 million currently enrolled in Ontario's elementary and secondary schools. These independent schools include Jewish schools, Muslim schools, Hindu schools and Christian-based schools, and I'm thinking of the Mennonite schools throughout my riding. I think of the Jarvis district Christian school just up the road from my farm. A number of years ago, my daughter attended a Montessori school. We think of Waldorf schools and innovative teaching schools, and those schools that provide specific instructions for students with certain disabilities.

Parents and students at these schools, in my opinion, both need and deserve a more fair footing when it comes to government funding for their children's education. In 2002, parents of students at independent schools were reimbursed 10% of the first \$7,000 of tuition fees. That provided a maximum tax credit of \$700 per child. The legislation we're debating this afternoon would accelerate the tax credit to a maximum of 20% of tuition for each child in 2003, 30% in 2004, 40% for 2005 and 50% for 2006 and beyond. This credit will assist those parents who choose an education for their child that may better reflect their religious or cultural heritage or may better respond to a child's special needs. The parents of students in independent schools would see a maximum tax credit of \$3,500 per child when this credit program is fully implemented. With respect to children of kindergarten age, I'll point out that the maximum eligible tuition fee is \$350 a month, \$3,500 annually. This would result in a maximum tax credit of \$1,750 per child once this is fully implemented.

In this year's budget, we proposed legislation to fulfill the remaining steps of the tax credit phase-in. This would entrench the schedule to provide parents with greater certainty in coming years. This year's throne speech made a commitment to work with parents who have children in independent schools to ensure that they can measure their children's progress in core subjects. This legislation, The Right Choices for Equity in Education Act, will place the original schedule for delivery of the graduated equity back on track. It will restore true education choice to thousands of parents and students across Ontario who are interested in attending these independent schools.

To the members present and those watching the parliamentary channel, we're asking for support for the equity in education tax credit to acknowledge that one size does not fit all and to give parents true choice as to where they want to send their kids for schooling. We're talking about true choice, as opposed to, in a sense, the forced options of the past that have forced parents without access to the resources to the necessary tuition money to send their school-age children to institutions that may well reflect neither their values nor their beliefs.

As an MPP, I have received hundreds of letters over the past several years from parents—I represent a rural riding—who want a better arrangement to send their chil-

dren to an independent school and letters from parents who don't find their children's education needs adequately reflected in our public system. In fact, I visited a number of these schools, including the Christian reform, the school in Jarvis and the Mennonite schools in my area to talk to teachers and parents and to get a first-hand look at the educational structure provided at these independent institutions. What I heard from parents and teachers was a bit of an eye-opener. These are very hard-working people. Essentially, they're really trying to ensure the best for their children. I've been told time and time again that they want their children educated in their own culture and religion, but again, they find the cost prohibitive and quite onerous.

I do want to point out that with respect to money, this credit is not about helping rich parents send their children to expensive independent schools. Rather, it is aimed at low- and middle-income families, families that are seeking choice.

1520

I wish to refer to Elaine Hopkins, executive director of the Ontario Federation of Independent Schools. She's indicated that students at over 95% of the independent schools are from middle-class families. They're facing tuition fees between \$4,000 and \$9,000 a year. These kinds of fees at those levels essentially put independent schooling out of reach of people in the low- and middle-income categories when they're faced with such a daunting cost. In the past, they have had little real choice other than to sign off or sign up for another year at a public school. Through this tax credit, we're attempting to reel in this price tag and place educational choice right back in the laps of parents, where it belongs.

Having said that, I would also like to mention that the equity in education tax credit in no way diminishes our government's commitment to a quality publicly funded system. In fact, we remain in firm support of publicly funded education and have upheld that commitment since 1995. In 1995, you will recall, we were spending \$12.9 billion a year. In the coming school year, our government will be investing \$15.3 billion, and this rises to \$16.2 billion in the 2005-06 school year. That's \$16.2 billion.

The equity in education tax credit does provide parents with choice, but this legislation will also provide them with greater certainty. Concerns about the government paying this tax credit, about government and society funding this and the concern that this would be a credit for wealthy people, are baseless and unfounded. While opposition rhetoric has suggested the wealthy may be encouraged to pull their children from publicly funded schools, resulting in a two-tier education system, history has shown that this is simply not the case. When both British Columbia and Manitoba introduced programs to support parental choice, there was no significant increase in the independent schools' share of the general school population.

Ontario's public system and Ontario's Catholic system continue to offer high-quality education that meets the needs of most families. There's no reason to believe this will change as a result of supporting choice for parents.

I refer to a recent Statistics Canada report entitled *Trends in the Use of Private Education*. It states, "Across Canada, the proportion of students in private schools has increased by one percentage point, from 4.6% to 5.6%." Here in Ontario specifically, the proportion has also increased by one percentage point. Ontario still remains below the national average, with only 4.3% of its children attending private school in 1998-99. I compare that 4.3% to the 5.6% national statistic I just referred to.

I do wish to reiterate that this tax credit will help lower- and middle-income parents to exercise choice and to provide education for their children in a manner that's consistent with their cultural and religious beliefs, ever bearing in mind, however, that a strong public education system for our children has always been a top priority of both the Mike Harris government and the Ernie Eves government. Higher standards, more rigorous curriculum and standardized testing are hallmarks of our government to ensure children are learning what they need to achieve, learning what they need for their potential to succeed in the future.

To be more specific, Premier Eves has increased resources for textbooks and has expanded programs like early reading and early math. We've provided school boards with multi-year funding commitments to support better planning and more accountability to taxpayers and to parents, and we support long-term collective agreements for teachers.

Our commitment to a strong public education system is clear. Just as clear, however, is our commitment here to give parents education funding fairness and real choice when it comes to where their children should be educated.

I do realize that there are those on the other side of the House who do not support the concept that parents should have a right to choose where their children are educated, and that there are those who would attempt to remove support for families choosing to school their children according to their religious and cultural beliefs.

On this side of the Legislature, we believe that by offering families more choices and respecting their religious and cultural makeup, we are continuing to invest in the future of our great province, allowing and enabling our families and their communities to develop and share their unique strengths and diversities.

Our position on funding private and private religious schools remains unchanged. We are committed to providing an excellent public education system that's open to all students regardless of religious or cultural background. While we recognize the right of parents to choose alternate forms of education for their children, Ontario does remain committed to the existing publicly funded, universally accessible public education system and will continue to uphold our constitutional obligation to fund both public and Roman Catholic schools.

For parents to benefit from the tax credit, the independent schools their children attend will be required to provide parents with a statement of information describing their academic programs, the achievements expected and the professional credentials of their

teachers. The schools will also be required to conduct criminal background checks on all teachers and others who will be coming or who do come in contact regularly with pupils.

We'll also pass regulations to require independent schools to assess student achievement in the core subjects of reading, writing and mathematics and to share that assessment with parents.

Regulations under the Income Tax Act establish further eligibility criteria for this tax credit. Under these regulations, eligible tuition fees will, for example, exclude tuition fees offset by scholarships or bursaries and fees paid for items such as meals, computers, books, clothing, travel and sports equipment, if not normally included in the tuition. Eligible tuition fees are reduced to reflect any charitable donations and medical expense tax credits that may be claimed. Also, tuition fees must exclude any amounts eligible for the child care tax credit.

The Income Tax Act also ensures that eligible independent schools must have five students throughout the year, must have their principal places of instruction in Ontario and must conduct criminal history checks of every individual associated with the school—as I mentioned, anyone who would be coming in contact with students.

As well, these schools must annually provide parents and the Minister of Finance with information on legal operating names and addresses, the academic program, student evaluation, teachers' professional credentials and fees.

Again, this act answers the call of parents who want something better than a one-size-fits-all approach to education. One-size-fits-all simply does not work in Ontario, and most definitely does not work with respect to our education system in rural Ontario, and our government understands this.

That's why we have the geographic circumstances grant, for example, which provides additional resources to boards to help with costs of operating small schools in remote areas. The small schools component of this grant, based on pupils per grade, distance from other schools and ratios of principals to schools, is projected to provide \$79 million in 2003-04, while the remote and rural component, based on overall board enrolment, distance from major urban centres and the distance between the board schools, is projected to provide \$128 million.

1530

The present administrative challenges of running small schools have resulted in the very recent announcement of \$50 million for a rural education strategy. We, as parents, as educators, as members of rural communities, have long argued that schools in our communities face circumstances and challenges that are different from those faced by schools in urban areas, especially in light of the crucial role some small schools serve in their particular town. The rural education strategy has been proposed to address those unique challenges faced by our rural schools. As you know, currently Dr James Downie, adviser for the rural education strategy, is wrapping up

consultations aimed at developing a comprehensive strategy to provide support for our small rural schools—schools that are so essential to our smaller communities across the province.

I urge this assembly to pass The Right Choices for Equity in Education Act. Our government's support for equity and choice in education would provide our students with the added tools their families feel they require to succeed. This tax credit really represents respect for the fundamental right to choose what is best for one's children, and in my view it's right, within Ontario and for the people of Ontario.

As I've indicated, a one-size-fits-all approach to education does not do justice to the diversity of our area. It does not do justice to the multicultural reality of Ontario. This tax credit truly will enable our communities to continue to develop and to share their unique strengths.

Hon Frank Klees (Minister of Transportation): I'm pleased to join this debate on Bill 53, The Right Choices for Equity in Education Act. I've been pleased to be engaged in the debate relating to this subject over the last number of years. In fact, I recall I was just elected in 1995 when I had a visit at that time in my constituency office from a gentleman by the name of John Vanasselt, who represents the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools. He came to me at that time and spoke to me about the principle of wanting to see the government support independent schools in some form.

I think ideally he would have liked to see, as no doubt many in the independent schools movement would like to see, the government place independent schools on the same level of funding as perhaps the public school system, and the kind of funding that has been extended, as a result of initiatives by this government, I might say, to the separate school system, the Catholic school system in our province.

The rationale for that is very simple when you listen to its proponents, and that is, for every student who isn't in the public system and is in fact in an independent or private school, that is funding the public coffers do not have to extend in support of those students. So while people continue to pay their provincial taxes even though their children are perhaps in an independent school, the argument has been, "We're really paying twice. We're paying once through our income taxes, and that goes to support the public school system, and then we're paying again when we pay the tuition for the independent schools."

I have to say to you that my personal view on this matter is that the independent school system—whether that be a faith-based school system or an independent school system that is based perhaps on a particular curriculum focus—plays a very important role within our communities and within the broader society.

They do so because, with regard to faith-based education, I believe it allows parents to provide some guidance to their children as they are growing up on the very important, fundamental principles of faith, culture and history that they feel is so much a part of who they are, and that is passed along in the course of education.

When we think about it, the reality is that children spend so many hours in the course of a day under the guidance of their schools, often unfortunately so. They often spend more time being subjected to their teachers within their schools than under the guidance of their own parents. So it's particularly important that parents have the opportunity and the choice to send their children to be educated in an environment where not only do they get the academic training but they also have the opportunity to learn something about their culture, their religious base, the principles and the values that they feel to be important.

So this government made that decision to support and extend through a new funding formula equity in education, if you will, to the separate school system, to the Catholic school system. That was the right decision. But having made that decision, I believe it is important that we continue down that road of equity to ensure that parents who want the choice to have their children educated in a faith-based system—whether that be the Jewish system, a Christian school, an Islamic school or others, or, as I said before, a particular academic speciality—that those parents have that choice and that option as well and that they are not disadvantaged as a result of the cost.

Now, opponents—and I say this with all respect, because I know that members opposite, members of the Liberal party and perhaps even of the NDP, struggle with this. I know there are individual Liberal members, honourable members, who have a real difficulty with the position their leader has taken on this. The leader of the Liberal Party, and members of the Liberal Party, have made it very clear that if they are elected they will dismantle this provision that will extend financial support to parents who hold dear that choice to send their children to faith-based educational institutions in this province.

A word of caution, and I say this in all sincerity to people right across this province, that when they consider their options in an upcoming election, whenever that might be, a very important choice for them will be: if I elect to put my X beside the name of a Liberal candidate or an NDP candidate, what I am doing is dismantling a policy that was brought in by the Ontario PCs in this government, by the Eves government.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Klees: The member opposite is now clapping because she thinks that that is a win for her. Again, I say to people in this province: be very careful in this upcoming election. Know that when you elect to put your X beside the name of either an NDP or a Liberal candidate, you are agreeing that people in this province should not have the right to have financial support if they choose to send their children to an independent school, if they choose to send their child to a faith-based educational institution—a very important point. People should not forget that.

1540

I would like to read into the record—because I think this illustrates how people, certainly in my constituency,

think about this very important issue. It speaks to the type, the kind of people we're talking about. One of the fallacies that I hear spoken often is that this particular policy supports the rich, the people who are sending their children to Upper Canada College or to St Andrew's College, and these people are paying tuition in the thousands of dollars—\$10,000, \$15,000, \$20,000 a year—and these are wealthy people, and somehow, through this policy, the government is supporting its rich friends. That's what's being said.

Let me clear the record for people, because that's simply not the case. It's simply not true. I have a letter here from Brent and Jenny Westerik of Richmond Hill, in my constituency. They write, and with your permission I will read this into the record:

"We, Brent and Jenny Westerik, of Richmond Hill, are the parents of two children who attend the Willowdale Christian School, one of Ontario's independent schools. We would like to let you know that we support the tax credit proposal for independent schools. As a middle-income family, earning less than \$60,000 per year, we very much welcome the tax credit and encourage you to support this legislation. We believe that in this country, all citizens should have the freedom to educate their children in the system of their choice, and by offering this tax relief, not just the rich would have this choice. The proposed tax credit will not erode the public school system. Other provinces which provide funding for private/religious/denominational schools still have strong public school systems. Why should Ontario be any different?

"Thank you for your anticipated support for this proposed legislation.

"God bless you.

"Yours truly,

"Brent and Jenny Westerik" of Richmond Hill.

I'm pleased to read that into the record because it does a number of things. First, it underscores the fact that this is not about providing benefits to the rich in our society. It speaks to the issue that average families, working families—in this particular case, an income level of \$60,000, as they say; certainly not wealthy. But they have made the choice, no doubt with a great deal of financial stress, to spend the additional dollars to send their children to a Christian school. They do so because they believe, first of all, it's in the best interests of their children to do so. They believe that it will add to the education, the quality of education that their children receive. I read the letter because I think it should be a signal to members opposite, who are probably struggling within themselves. I know some of the members particularly struggle within themselves. I know that some of the members struggle within themselves when they see their party, their party whip, no doubt, and their leader calling them in when they see that perhaps there's some waffling happening, and there's some indecision and some wrestling with the principle of, "Should I be doing the right thing for children in this province and for the education system in this province, or do I simply follow

the dictates of the leader of my party? Do I just do what Mr McGuinty is telling me to do for his own reasons, or do I do the right thing?"

I urge them to consider letters like this, because this is just one example of how people think. It happens to be a constituent of mine. I can assure you that there are many constituents in your riding who think exactly that way.

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): Look in the mirror.

Hon Mr Klees: The member opposite says, "Look in the mirror." You know, I have done that, and I speak to this with some personal experience as well. I made a decision to send my son to an independent school. I did so at my personal cost, because I believed it was in his best interest to pay the additional tuition. I have no regrets about that. I know what it's like at the end of the month when the additional funds could well be used for other things, but as parents you make the decision to make an investment in the life of your child because you believe it's the right thing to do. Many parents across this province are welcoming not only the policy but the fact that through this bill we will accelerate the implementation of the tax credit.

I want to recognize the leadership of a number of individuals within our caucus. With all honesty, there was a great deal of debate around this issue, because there are people on both sides. I see my good friend the Honourable Jim Flaherty in the House, the Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation, I believe. To his credit, he, in many ways, led the charge on this initiative. It was when he was the Minister of Finance that this policy was initially introduced by our government. To his credit, he continued to ensure that this was an issue that was at the forefront of our priorities as a government. We are now here today reassuring people across this province that we are committed to this policy, to the principles that it represents, of equity and of choice for people in this province.

I want to recognize as well the good work of a good friend, someone who is showing a great deal of leadership in our communities, Dr Charles McVety, president of the Canada Christian College. I refer to him because he has certainly taken a leadership role, not only on this issue but on many others, but on this particular issue, was very helpful to us in terms of helping us understand the breadth and depth of support for this policy, and on many occasions provided moral support and encouragement for us to continue to hold steadfast to ensuring that this policy was implemented.

These are individuals representative of people who have seen the importance of this policy and have done their part to ensure its implementation. I've been pleased to be part of that process. My constituents know full well the degree to which I have lent my support. My colleagues and caucus know that I have spoken very consistently over the years about the importance of providing some support. I think the issue of providing this financial support through a tax credit was an innovative way for us to do it. It was a very equitable way for us to provide this support.

1550

I'm going to defer the rest of my time to my colleague who will speak to this. I just want to make one last appeal to all the members of this House, and particularly to members of the Liberal caucus, to rethink their position on this. They have taken the position that if they had the opportunity, they would cancel this, they would do away with this opportunity of equity in choice and financial support for parents, whether they be Christian, Jewish, Muslim or whether they have academic hopes for their children relating to specific academically specialized schools. I ask members opposite to give a very sober second thought to their position on this. To take this away from the people in the province would be most unfair. It would be a step back.

I'm hopeful that the collective wisdom of people in this province will see clearly the choice in the next election. If on no other issue but on this one, I am convinced there will be many people who will make the choice to vote for Ernie Eves continuing as Premier to continue to implement this policy and to strengthen families, to strengthen education through this very important policy initiative.

Thank you, Speaker, for your attentiveness. I look forward to hearing from my colleague, who will build on the comments we have made on this issue. Again, I urge members of the opposition: rethink your position on this. Support us in implementing choices for equity in education.

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): I too am very pleased to have the opportunity to support the Right Choices for Equity in Education Act. The Minister of Transportation, the Honourable Frank Klees, so eloquently spoke of his passionate support for this bill, and he spoke of the tough choices he made to send his son to an independent school, at a considerable cost. I, too, a number of years ago, when my kids were growing up and going to junior kindergarten and senior kindergarten, made the choice with my wife, who had gone to independent schools—I came from the public school system—that both my daughters should go to independent schools. I'm very pleased to say that my younger one is writing her final exam today—the double cohort, grade 12—and certainly best wishes to her and all the other children who are working hard and progressing well.

It is the policy of our government in terms of even simple policies such as standardized testing—there was a time when kids would keep on passing without really having any measurement of how they compared with other schools, how the teachers' performances compared with other schools. So I was quite pleased to support that as well. It is important to measure the success of the system.

I was elected on June 3, 1999. Soon after that, I was able to meet with certain groups that were proposing there should be funding available to parents who wanted to send their children to independent schools, religious schools, schools of their choice. The presentations they

made made a lot of sense. Of course, even before that I had decided that my kids were going to go to independent schools because I wanted the choice. I was not going to benefit directly from it. Nonetheless, there was the argument they made and the talks they put forward, including the inequity that existed in terms of certain schools being given full funding, but if you wanted to send your children to independent schools, you did not have the same benefit.

For example, the public school system, the Catholic school system and the francophone school system have full funding, and that's great. But if you decided to send your children to Khalsa school, religious school, Punjabi school, Hindu school, Jewish school or Christian school, you did not have that equality of funding. In fact, the United Nations cited us for not doing something right in terms of extending funding only to certain schools and not to all schools.

I was quite pleased when Minister Jim Flaherty, when he was Minister of Finance, brought forward this equality in his budget. I'm very happy to be supporting this. I believe all members, on this side anyway, support this. I know many members on the opposite side support it, but they are going to be very political and may not vote for it.

I was quite amazed the other day. I was at a fund-raising function for an independent school and my Liberal opponent came there. Without even knowing the issue, he said, "We're going to abandon this policy." Of course, the parents were quite upset because this is something they have fought for for a long time. They were not pleased. I'm not sure whether my Liberal opponent knew what he was talking about, but nonetheless, if that's their policy, then the parents of this independent Khalsa school, all 600 of them, are going to have to make a choice. Like Minister Klees said earlier on, when they go to the ballot box to make the choice, then they'll know exactly what Liberals stand for, what the NDP stands for and what benefits we as a government are giving and offering them. I think there's a clear choice.

Our government first introduced this equity in education tax credit in 2001. At that time, we made the very clear point that some parents who wanted to choose where to send their children to school found the cost of doing so very prohibitive. As we said at that time, "While we continue to provide increased funding to our public education system, we believe it is now time to address the concerns of these parents.... We propose to phase in a partial tax credit for parents of children at independent schools. With this measure, Ontario will join other provinces in supporting educational choice."

Premier Ernie Eves reiterated this very notion of choice when he announced on March 20 of this year that our government would accelerate the implementation schedule for this tax credit. In fact, he went a step further and announced that independent schools would be required to provide additional information of interest to parents.

I'd like to quote the Premier: "Parents have told us that the tax credit supports the choices they make when it

comes to the education and future of their children. We are taking the necessary steps to ensure that students and parents are provided with information on their children's progress in core subjects."

1600

The fact is that tax cuts work on a number of levels. First and foremost, they leave people's hard-earned money in their own pockets so they can decide how best to spend, save or invest it, as they so choose.

You might have noticed that I said individual taxpayers know better than the government does what to do with their own money—despite what the opposition people might think, that they know better how to spend people's money. That's not the case with our government. That is the underlying philosophy of all our tax cuts, and it applies to the equity in education tax cut as well.

When we first came to office in 1995, government was in a mess. You know that, Mr Speaker. You were there. The province was spending \$1 million more an hour than it was taking in. Ontario faced a deficit of \$11.3 billion a year. Our government saw that things could be better and did something about it. We have consistently demonstrated our willingness and commitment to balancing the budget, investing in key priorities and managing the province's books responsibly.

Our plan is working and it is producing results. First, the province has seen the creation of more than one million net new jobs since 1995. We continue to see the positive result of this plan. Just last week, our government announced that Ontario job creation had accounted for all the jobs created in Canada in the first five months of 2003, and that is 44,000 full-time and part-time jobs. So Ontario created all the jobs that were created in Canada.

The secret is very simple. Tax cuts create jobs. I think it's good to know. It has been proven. I'd like to say that again: tax cuts create jobs.

I think people at home watching this program realize that, even though initially when we talked about these things, when the province was losing \$11 billion, so-called political pundits or financial gurus said this could not be done. I am sure even some of the people with Conservative values might have thought, "I don't know. It sounds pretty tough to do. You're losing money. You cut more taxes. And you say you're going to create more jobs and have more money to spend on health and education and programs like this, where you're giving tax credits to people to make the choice about what is best for their children?"

I think that's fair. We've seen the kind of astonishing job creation I just talked about in this great province at the same time we have managed to balance the budget and cut taxes. Up until this year, we had cut taxes 208 times. That's after a decade of tax-and-spend governments that always thought they could spend their way to prosperity. What wrong thinking. They thought they were going to spend their way out of recession.

In this year's budget, we have proposed an additional 17 tax cuts, bringing the total to a very impressive 225

tax cuts implemented and proposed in the past eight years. More needs to be done.

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): What did the government before us do?

Mr Gill: Of course they increased taxes. They believe in tax and spend. What happened then? The deficit went up as high as \$11.3 billion a year.

Tax cuts work. They create jobs, they attract investment and they help keep Ontario's economy healthy and competitive. Tax cuts are an important part of our government's agenda, but they are only one part of it. Another is debt repayment. As I said earlier, in 1995 the hard-working taxpayers of this province were facing the very real prospect of an annual deficit of \$11.3 billion. That is roughly \$1,000 for every man, woman and child in this province. We recognized and, more important, taxpayers were telling us that this was unsustainable. Every dollar we had to spend on debt repayment was a dollar that could not be spent on a better use. So we took tough, decisive action: we cut wasteful government spending, we cut taxes and we created the right environment for investment and job creation. In doing so, we were able to put in place the right fundamentals to ensure that our government could pay down \$5 billion of the provincial debt, the largest amount any government has ever repaid in the history of this province.

As I said earlier, we balanced the budget five years in a row. It's the first time this has happened in almost a century; in fact, since 1908. A balanced budget means more than just keeping both sides of the ledger in check; it means balancing interests, balancing priorities and balancing needs. As Minister Ecker said in her budget statement, "The decisions a government makes in a budget are never easy. Many competing demands require difficult choices. A keen sense of balance is needed."

During our government's pre-budget consultations—and they were extensive. I know that Minister Ecker consulted far and wide. She went to all the corners of this province and met with many interested parties. She had many meetings with MPPs. I know it was extensive. I don't think this kind of consultation was ever undertaken previously, so I commend her for that.

Because of those focus groups, the minister and the people wanted us to focus on several key things: health care, education, safe and strong communities, and ensuring accountability—this is important—for the dollars we spend on people's behalf. Our government took their advice very seriously. We heeded it in building the 2003 provincial budget.

When my colleague the Minister of Finance delivered that budget, she made a very specific point of talking about what we had heard from individuals, businesses and numerous associations and groups across the province.

To quote Minister Ecker again, she said, "You told me that health care and education are your most important priorities; that your children and grandchildren need high standards and resources in school to succeed; that you require quality health care, when and where you need it, to stay well and get well."

She also said, "You told me that continued tax relief is important not just because it rewards individual initiative by leaving more money in your pocket to spend, save or invest, but because you recognize that lower taxes attract and keep jobs here."

She goes on to say, "You spoke about how our young people need more opportunities for post-secondary education, for skills training and apprenticeships, and about your concerns for your parents' and grandparents' ability to live independently in their own homes."

"You made it clear that strong communities require roads, transit, and safe and clean water."

She goes on to say, "You told me that you wish governments were more accountable for the way they spend your tax dollars because you are often skeptical about whether the results are meeting your priorities."

Those are eloquent words that the minister spoke, and I'm proud to say that in speaking those eloquent words, she speaks not only for herself, not only for the cabinet, but for all members of this government and for millions of taxpayers across the province.

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Among those millions of taxpayers are parents who choose to send their children to independent schools. Our government is proud of its historic investment in the public school system—something I will return to shortly. I was quite pleased, as I said earlier, to be present at a cheque presenting ceremony with the Peel board of education, where we made a historic investment of \$950 million, and soon after that on the same day with the Dufferin-Peel school board, where we gave them \$650 million, which in total amounts to more than \$1.5 billion. That's a substantial investment in public school education.

Many of us think of independent schools as primarily offering religious or cultural-based education. This only tells part of the story. Many of the independent schools that qualify for the equity in education tax credit are familiar to members of this House. For example, Montessori and Waldorf schools come immediately to mind. In my own riding, as I said earlier, there is a Khalsa school. Hard-working parents are sending their children to this school because they believe in traditional education. I think it's fair that we—not to the full extent but to a small extent at least—extend those credits to those hard-working parents.

I'm sure after my speech, I've been able to convince all members of this House to pass this in a speedy way.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Ruprecht: Surely we all struggle with this issue of funding and giving tax credits to independent schools. I just want to make two points that convinced me against this issue.

First, we cannot afford to take over \$500 million out of the public system over the next few years. Anyone who knows about school funding and the condition of our schools has to come to that conclusion.

Second, I'm the critic of the Ministry of Citizenship. The ministry has a great responsibility to ensure that

everyone is treated equally. That means our schools are really the heart of our communities. As the heart of our communities, they are more than just centres of learning. They are more than simply providers of a formal education. We learn so much more in our schools than simply formal education.

Kids who are going to public school learn how to get along with each other. They rub shoulders with each other. They will understand other cultures much better. That convinced me more than anything else that we cannot afford to provide every tribe, every organization that's got the finances and the know-how, and separate them from our main system. That would simply mean that children of their own tribe will get to know only each other. They will never learn about the great multicultural country we have as Canadians.

Consequently, I simply say that I only hope you would reconsider this issue and reconsider this special point that our schools are more than simply providers of formal education. It's multiculturalism that made this country great, and I would hope that through multiculturalism we will learn more.

Ms Churley: Here we are again today, debating another tax break that's going to benefit some Tory members. We had two members stand up today, the member for Oak Ridges and the member for Bramalea, and talk about their kids going to private schools. I don't know how many other members of the Tory caucus have kids in private schools. I would argue that it's your responsibility to send your kids to public schools. If you don't like some of things that are happening there, improve upon them. What you've done instead is take \$2 billion out of the public school system, and this is going to take another \$500 million out. Your members are going to benefit; you're going to benefit. Any of your members who have kids in private schools is going to benefit.

On top of getting rid of the surcharge to higher-income earners, you're going to benefit from that as well. Just take a look at some of those tax cuts and see who's really going to benefit.

What this is all about is another election ploy. You talk about being able to stand up and say that the NDP and the Liberals won't support giving tax breaks for private schools. Well, God bless: if people want to send their kids to private schools, let them do it out of their own pocketbook, not by taking more money out of the public school system, which is suffering severely under your government—\$2 billion already taken out. We just had the Rozanski report come out. It talked about the need to invest that \$2 billion back in the public school system. You're going in the opposite direction by taking more money out of an education system that is already in crisis.

You stand here today and talk about putting money back into the pockets of people who want to send their kids to private schools instead of improving the system we have. The worst thing about this is that there's no public accountability. All the private schools have to do

is inform the Ministry of Education that they intend to operate. That's what's happening here.

Hon Ernie Hardeman (Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I just want to add my voice of compliment to the three members who spoke to the bill. I think it's so important to recognize that we put this legislation in place to give a little encouragement to parental choice. We hear a lot of comments from across the aisle about the quality and good education our children get in the public system. I want to say that's where my children were educated, and I think they got a wonderful education. But there are a lot of people in my community who believe there is more to education than we are providing in our public system. Because of the type of education we have to give to make sure it addresses the needs of all children, we cannot address some of the cultural and religious concerns some parents have.

People in my community—it's not private schools where they have all the money and they can send these children to private schools; it is middle- to low-income people who are sending their children to primarily Christian schools. I think it's very appropriate that we have a tax regime that helps them do that. I think it's important that we all recognize that this is not about giving these parents the ability to take money that's going to educate children in the public system out of the system. They are paying and continue to pay to have their children educated in the public system. Over and above that, they are paying to have their children educated in a school of their choice, where there is a religious bent to the education. I think it's very appropriate that we help them do it.

During the consultation on this bill, I asked some parents whether they thought we could put the religious part into education in our public system, and if that would serve their needs. The answer coming back was, "No, you can't do that, because a religious education isn't teaching religion in the schools; it is teaching everything in the schools in a religious way." I think this will help them do that.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I remember the then-Minister of Education, Mrs Ecker, saying that extending funding to private schools would result in fragmentation of the education system and undermine the goal of universal access. This was the then Minister of Education, Janet Ecker. When Ernie Eves was running for leader of this party, he said it was outrageous that they would extend funding for private schools. Now they have a different tune.

We've seen what this government means by tax cuts. When they promise a tax cut, they mean a service cut. For eight years, people in Ontario have seen that tax cuts mean service cuts in our hospitals, our schools and our cities. All of a sudden, they've got all this money to throw around for private schools and they've got money for seniors. People say to me, "Why haven't they helped schools and seniors for the last eight years?" Now, on the eve of an election, they're making these promises they can't keep.

Standard and Poor's and the Dominion Bond Rating Service say they've got a \$3-billion hole in the budget. They're going to have to make \$3 billion in cuts. We've had eight years of dismantling, crisis and conflict in our schools across Ontario because of this government's reckless changes that have turned schools upside down and sideways; attacked teachers, parents and students; no textbooks; no basic repairs, no caretakers, no lunchroom supervision. Now all of a sudden they say, "Trust us. We are going to make this better by giving public money for private schools." Is there anybody in Ontario who will trust this gang that couldn't shoot straight—whose leader, Mr Snobelen, is now in Oklahoma riding a horse—with fixing education after what they have done for the last eight years?

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The Deputy Speaker: The member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale has two minutes to reply.

Mr Gill: I do appreciate all the members—Davenport, Toronto-Danforth, Oxford, Eglinton-Lawrence—who spoke their points of view. I know that most of them, other than the member from Oxford, seemed to disagree with this particular tax credit. The member from Toronto-Danforth said, "It's another tax cut. How can they do that and spend more money on education and more money on health care?" When I was speaking earlier on, as I started my debate, I did mention that it's been proven over and over. I think I said that twice, just to make sure that people understood that. I'll repeat it: tax cuts create jobs.

Also, I believe the member from Eglinton-Lawrence said, "Well, you know, they make promises and people think they're not going to keep them." This government is the government—promises made, promises kept. It's as simple as that.

Yes, the election is coming up. We don't know when that is going to be. We have until June 3, 2004, so we have another year to go. But the fact of the matter is, the platform, *The Road Ahead*, is already out there. People will have a clear choice. People will have a choice to look at the blue book, the red book, the orange book. They already know which party keeps their promises, and they will see in that that the philosophy of tax cuts is going to continue. And having done that, with the policy of job creation and more taxes coming into the government, we have promised that we'll be reducing the debt by \$5 billion more. There will be more money, as previously stated, for health care, for education, for all the good things Ontario needs.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'll be sharing my time with the member for Parkdale-High Park, Mr Speaker.

Just a comment on the member for Gore-Bramalea-Malton. I smile about the "promises made, promises kept." I carry these things around with me. Here are the promises you made in 1999. "We're going to cut property taxes by 20%." You abandoned that one. The Minister of Finance said, "Listen, we're not going to go ahead with that. We've decided we're going to abandon

that." You promised everybody they'd get a 20% cut in the residential education property tax. They got 10% at the last election; then you've abandoned the last 10% of it.

I carry this around too. What's this called? The Official Newsletter of the Ontario PC Party, Questions and Answers: "How can the government justify breaking the Taxpayer Protection Act by delaying tax cuts?" In other words, in your own document you have to sort of say, "Well, we broke that promise. How do we justify it?" Because "To meet our target of a balanced budget, the government delayed tax cuts."

So I just say to the public, be very skeptical when they talk about "promises made, promises kept." Lots of promises in the last election, and you still haven't kept them. The Taxpayer Protection Act—you abandoned it.

But we're here today to debate the private school funding proposal. I would say that perhaps of all the things you're proposing, this one is the one that troubles me the most. I will use, as evidence, documents that the then Minister of Education, Ms Ecker, and the then Premier, Mr Harris, prepared, arguing strenuously against this proposal and did a lot of research on why it was a bad idea and why Ontario should not proceed with this. I'll quote those in a few moments.

By the way, Mr Speaker, I believe we have a one-hour lead now. I'm looking at the clock, which I think says 17 minutes, so I would appreciate it if you'd reset the clock, as they say.

I want to talk about the experience in the area I represent. I represent an area called Scarborough-Agincourt. My wife and I and our four children have lived there since 1965, so almost 40 years. I can tell you that our community has gone through enormous change. We are perhaps the most diverse community in Canada now. I was looking at some of the numbers before I came to the Legislature, and today about 70% of the people in the area I represent are called "visible minority." I don't like that term, but that's how Statistics Canada reports it.

As I say, we're extremely diverse. It has gone through enormous change over the last 40 years, and it has gone through that change with tremendous goodwill; virtually no problems in the community going through that change. In my opinion, the major reason—not by any means the only reason but the major reason, the most important reason—has been our schools, particularly I might say our secondary schools, where young people from a variety of backgrounds come together.

By the way, just on that time, if I might say, I think that's still not the correct time, Mr Speaker. I believe we still have probably 53 minutes left or so. I would appreciate it if the table might look at that time and reset the clock once again. I believe I've only been speaking probably for four or five minutes.

In any event, back to the point I'm making: our community has gone through enormous change with terrific goodwill, and I attribute that heavily to our secondary schools, where our young people, particularly at those challenging ages from 12 to 18 or 19, have come

together and benefited from the experience of working, going to school together and learning from each other.

This plan will fragment our schools. In the area I represent, I believe I'll probably see 10 new secondary schools open up from a variety of languages, religion and ethnicity.

Hon Mr Klees: That's good.

Mr Phillips: Is that good or bad? Mr Klees says it's good. I think that as we look ahead—and also bear this in mind—Ontario will continue to have 120,000 to 150,000 new Canadians coming to Ontario each and every year. There's a little-known study that the Ministry of Finance did, which was quite interesting, and that study indicated that without that level of immigration, our population in Ontario declines. The government did this study two years ago. We will continue to have immigration, and thank goodness for it, at that level, 120,000 to 150,000 each and every year for the foreseeable future. As I say, without it, our population declines. It's in all of our interests to make sure that continues to happen. But it's also in all of our interests to make sure we set a climate that is welcoming of those new citizens, that gives them a full opportunity to adjust as quickly as possible, that ensures that we set a climate for mutually working together.

What did the government say about that just three years ago, about a policy that would fragment our education system, where we would see support for private schools provided? Here's what Ms Ecker said in a strongly worded letter to the federal government.

"We believe that our commitment and resources must continue to focus on preserving and improving the quality of our publicly funded system." This is in response to a proposal by the United Nations Human Rights Commission to force Ontario to provide support for private schools. Ms Ecker at the time sent a strongly worded letter to the federal government saying we're opposed to that.

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"While the government of Ontario recognizes the right of parents to choose alternative forms of education for their children, it continues to have no plans to provide funding to private religious schools or to parents of children who attend such schools. As was set out in the submission to the United Nations Human Rights Commission, extending funding to religious private schools would result in fragmentation of the education system in Ontario and undermine the goal of universal access to education."

That is the now Minister of Finance speaking in a strongly worded letter.

The then Premier sent a letter to my leader saying, "Complying with the UN's demand, as the federal Liberal government would have us do, would remove from our existing public education system at least \$300 million per year, with some estimates as high as"—I believe it is \$500 million. "Obviously, such an action would run directly counter to Ontario's long-standing commitment to public education."

I wanted to get those two things once again on the record, as Mr Klees would say, so that the people of Ontario can recognize that this is what then-Premier Harris and the Minister of Education, Ms Ecker, said.

The government also provided quite a substantial study to support the strong decision to not provide funding for private schools. This is the Ontario government's submission:

"The objectives of the ... education system are the provision of a tuition-free, secular public education, universally accessible to all residents without discrimination on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex or physical disability, and the establishment of a public education system which fosters and promotes the values of a pluralist, democratic society, including social cohesion, religious tolerance and understanding.

"If the state party were required to fund private religious schools, this would have a detrimental impact on the public schools and hence the fostering of a tolerant, multicultural, non-discriminatory society in the province. This position of the province of Ontario"—remember, this is the Eves government speaking; this is their submission; this is what they are saying to the rest of the world—"is supported by expert evidence in reports and affidavit form as cited below.

"Public schools are a rational means of fostering social cohesion and respect for religious and other differences. To the extent that the public and common schools are the schools of choice for the great majority of families, these schools may be able to respect group differences while at the same time helping these students to perceive the common concerns....

"One of the strengths of a public system of education in a province and a country which are committed to a policy of multiculturalism is it provides a venue where people of all colours, races, national and ethnic origins, and religions interact and try to come to terms with one another's differences. Such a process is not without its problems and frictions, but the fact that the public school must deal with the varied needs and interests of the total population makes it a valuable institution for the creation of better understanding among the various groups. In this way, the public schools build social cohesion, tolerance and understanding."

Again, I say to the public, these are the strong arguments used by the government to say that while we support the right of individuals to send their young people to private schools, the funding will not be provided. That was the argument they used less than three years ago.

"Extending public school funding rights to private religious schools will undermine the ability of public schools to build social cohesion, tolerance and understanding."

The government goes on to say—and this was the Eves government, remember—"In addition, if public funding were provided for private schools established for the purpose of meeting specific religious needs, it is

difficult to see why public funding would not also be provided to private schools established to provide other specific needs of language or ethnicity or culture. This would have an adverse effect on the viability of the public system, which would become the system serving students not found admissible by any other system. The benefits which society now derives from a public school system would be reduced. Such potential fragmentation of the school system is an expensive and debilitating structure for society."

It goes on. But the point I'm making is for the public to recognize that these are the arguments that the government, the Eves government, put together—and I support the position they then had—to say, "Listen, anybody should have the right to send their children to any school they want to," but taking public tax money to support these schools will do all of the things that the government outlined here: fragment our schools, fragment our system. I say to us: Mr Klees is right, this will be an issue in the election. Make no mistake about it. I'm happy that it will be, because it's a relatively fundamental thing.

I believe the document that you presented three years ago, the one that the then Minister of Education, Mrs Ecker, and the Premier and others had researched, was right. The conclusions that you reached then were right. I realize how sensitive this is. As I say, in the area I represent, I think 10 new secondary schools will open up if this policy proceeds.

Mr Bob Wood (London West): What's wrong with that?

Mr Phillips: Mr Wood, from London West, says, "What's wrong with that?" It's just a difference of opinion. I believe that the research the government did three years ago, after a considerable amount of expense, I assume—as a matter of fact, in the document it talks about the position of the province of Ontario. The position then was to not provide the support: "The position of the province of Ontario is supported by expert evidence in reports" and affidavits. This was not something simply pulled out of the air. A lot of work went into that brief.

I go back to my own strongly held view of the future of this province. I repeat: Ontario will continue to have 120,000 to 150,000 new Canadians coming to it every year. The government has said we need those numbers just to maintain our population. That is what's going to happen. The government has said if we proceed to fund private schools, it will fragment our system, it will lead to a highly fragmented public education system.

I've lived through 40 years in the community I represent, having gone through enormous change, I can assure you, with a minimum of problems in the community. That's as a result of many things, but the major reason has been our secondary schools, our young people coming together. There's a school called L'Amoreaux Collegiate Institute in the area I represent, a terrific school. I often go there. I attend all the graduations. Around the meeting hall, there are flags from 83 countries. That represents the birthplaces of the students in

that school—83 different countries. You often hear about the Tamil community—two of the last three valedictorians of that school are from the Tamil community. It's just a terrifically diverse school. It's a model for me of how well our young people come together.

My very strong concern is the same concern that Minister Ecker, when she was Minister of Education, expressed to the United Nations: "Extending funding ... would result in fragmentation of the education system in Ontario and undermine the goal of universal access to education."

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I fully appreciate the depth of feeling on this issue. I've met with many of the groups that support this. For them it's a hugely important issue, one that they feel terribly strongly about. I've consistently expressed my view: I think I understand how strongly you feel about this and I understand that you support the extension of funding for private schools.

I have another concern, the same one the government outlined three years ago in its submission to the United Nations, that it will lead inevitably to a fragmentation of our system and the elimination of what I've regarded as an enormous asset for us, as we constantly adapt to our changing population, heavily influenced by immigration.

A secondary issue, of course, is that it's \$500 million, money that will be going into private schools. The government said it's \$300 million, but that estimate was done on the basis of enrolment of 100,000 students, and I think it's already at about 115,000 students. So it is heading—

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): It's costed at \$180 million.

Mr Phillips: You'll have your chance later.

That's Minister Ecker yelling at me, the same minister who three years ago wrote a strongly worded letter saying, "We're not going to go ahead with funding for private schools. It's a bad idea."

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): As the Minister of Education.

Mr Phillips: That was Minister Ecker then, who was then the Minister of Education, who's yelling once again here. But you see, she must be aware by now that she's on record. Her point of view is in black and white.

Minister Ecker, you wrote three years ago that it was a bad idea. You wrote to the federal government telling them that you strongly opposed this. You laid out for the people of Ontario why it was a bad idea.

I'm surprised she would choose to heckle here in the Legislature, particularly when she has flip-flopped on it for all to see. No doubt Mr Klees is right that it will be part of the election. It will be her letter, the then Premier's letter and the United Nations document prepared by the government of Ontario. As I said, this is quite fundamental to me and I think to the future of Ontario: do we want to ensure that we continue to have a public system that is open to everyone, that brings all of our young people together, where our extremely diverse young people can come together, or do we want to fragment?

I repeat: in the area I represent I know that there will be 10 new secondary schools on the basis of language, religion and ethnicity. I truly worry about that. My concerns, frankly, are very much supported by the document the government prepared. As we look ahead in this province, our future depends on having our young people know how to work well with each other. One of the key ways they've been able to do that is in coming together, particularly in our secondary schools, recognizing that we will continue to see in this province immigration of 120,000 to 150,000. I fully support that, as does the government, and our economic well-being in many respects depends on it. I always say to my friends in the business community, "Listen, if we don't have immigration, we'll never have to build another house in Ontario because our population will begin to decline. We will not have the labour force that will drive our economy. We will not have all the assets that are brought to this country through immigration."

One of our responsibilities is to make sure that we have in place the institutions and programs that allow those new people to feel at home as quickly as possible and to adapt as quickly as possible.

Make no mistake about it, this plan to fund private schools to the tune of \$500 million a year will lead to a significant fragmentation of our education system. Those who advocate on behalf of the funding believe there should be equal funding. This is merely the first step, because the argument in favour of this is to say that they are discriminated against right now. One of the arguments is, "There's a person next door to me getting funded to the tune of \$7,000 or \$8,000 a school. I think I should be equally funded." This is merely the first step down a road, if you follow this road, that will lead, as I said, to a dramatic fragmentation of our school system.

Frankly, Mr Klees, I'm quite happy that it be a campaign issue. You will advocate for it. This is what democracy is all about. You will say, "This is my vision of Ontario," and we will advocate differently. We have two different visions, and the people will decide. For me, it's an important issue that I don't mind debating.

In my own riding there are differences of opinion. As I said, there are at least 10 groups that would like to open their own secondary schools, and they will probably be supporting you. I will be at all candidates' meetings saying, "I have a bit of a different vision of this province and this country." I believe that the area I have represented has benefited enormously from our young people coming together, learning from each other and knowing each other. I use L'Amoreaux Collegiate as a metaphor in my own mind of this enormous diversity. I've watched, by the way, the change. That school changes almost yearly. The kind of students who come there are almost always reflective of the change in immigration patterns in this country. So I'm quite happy that this is an issue for the electorate.

I happen to personally think it is an extremely important issue. I look forward to a healthy debate during the campaign on it, because it's two different visions for

us. You have a vision—at least you have a vision today. By the way, the public should recognize that it is a totally different vision than Ernie Eves and Minister Ecker had down on paper three years ago, presented to the United Nations, saying, "We are not going to proceed with funding for private schools because it's a bad idea that will fragment our education system." That was—

Mr Gregory S. Sorbara (Vaughan-King-Aurora): It still is a bad idea.

Mr Phillips: My colleague says it still is. I believe from the bottom of my heart that it is a fundamentally bad idea.

My colleague from Parkdale is going to speak now.

I fully appreciate the depth of feeling of those who support this and I fully understand their arguments. I would just say to them that I appreciate it but I think there is another issue at stake here and that is, as I say, the fragmentation of our public education system, which to me is crucial. If we proceed down this road, we will look back 10 years from now and say, "That was a fundamental mistake we made." But I'm very happy to debate this on the campaign trail and let the public make the decision.

Mr Kennedy: It is a pleasure to join this debate, partly because this is the only opportunity that we get to make this a debate. The member from Scarborough-Agincourt made many cogent arguments. One of them was agreement with the member from Oak Ridges about having a campaign, a debate, a discussion. Was this subject to a campaign, a debate or a discussion? Frankly, it was. Do you know what Mr Harris, the Premier leading that party at the time, said? He said he wouldn't do it. That's what we heard in the last campaign.

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Suddenly, we have this government party, afraid of their convictions, afraid to put it before the people, afraid to put it out to hearings, afraid to hear what people think about it, sliding this in the back door. Let's wait for the closure motion. Let's wait for it to go clunk when they cut off debate on this, because they—the Minister of Finance, who is sponsoring this, used to be against it, then was against it again last year and now is for it—don't want it to be seen for what it is.

This is the hallmark of a desperate government, now putting itself in the hands of its extreme philosophical element with which some of those members proudly identify. Mr Flaherty was the one to initiate it. He now clearly has the steering device for this particular political party's fortunes, because he would implement this with glee. There are other members there who would say they have some reservations, but they don't express them here today. They would steer public education into the ditch with this particular measure. That's how important this is.

This is the epitome of this government's attitude toward publicly funded education. This is where they've been going. We on this side of the House can demonstrate that this alien idea, this strange concept of a tax credit, can't be found anywhere else in Canada. Only in

two spots in all of North America is this particular funding device being offered.

We can demonstrate that it has already damaged public education in the way it has gotten out there. It is the perfect companion to this government's attitudes and policies toward public education. They have put themselves in this particular circumstance of dragging down the public system, of making it work less effectively.

I want to readily concede that in this particular policy area, the government has been successful. They have had significant success in driving families and children away from public schools and into their private counterparts. The Ministry of Education data show that under this government, from 1995—

Interjection.

Mr Kennedy: It's not something the member from Thornhill wants to hear, because she is hoping this is an election bonanza for her. She hopes this is something that will help her at election time. She knows that in her riding, just as in every riding, there are very eminently reasonable people, like past-Premier Mr Davis, for example, who look at this track record and see 37,000 new children added to the private school system—an increase of 49% under this government—and an increase in the public system that has been cut in half, to 5%. There has been 10 times the growth in private schools in Ontario under Mike Harris and Ernie Eves. That's their legacy, that's their success. And that's with only one year of this particular financial incentive under their belt.

What does that mean in practical terms? Well, in the five years previous to this particular government, only one in 16 new students went to private schools. Now, under their calculated policies, it's one in four. One in four new students is going to private schools because of the success of this government's policy to deconstruct public education. Make no mistake about it, this is just the crowning touch to what they've been up to: to deconstruct public education and chase frustrated families and children away from it, and we'll establish exactly how they've done that.

This is the proof. This is exactly what has happened: an almost 50% increase in enrolment in private schools. At the very same time as the member for London West is trying to defend his government's record, they have closed 440 public schools and opened 225 private schools. That's success. That's what they want. That's the tearing down of the public education system. That's what the members opposite stand for with this particular bill.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. If you want to have a conversation with somebody across the way, go across and talk to them or else leave.

The Chair recognizes the member for Parkdale-High Park.

Mr Kennedy: It is stunning to me that this government isn't standing up here with some backbone and saying, "This is what we want." They want to pull down the public system. They want to strip it down, the way

they are doing today in Toronto and in other places around the province. They are taking away the essential services that people need.

We will clearly establish exactly how it is. This government has an intent. They have, in fact, some success with this particular policy. But it is this debate and the debates that are sure to follow that are going to be the means by which the government really gets a good look at that. The deconstruction of public education is so essential, is so important, that that policy of theirs needs to be exposed. It needs to be brought up in this debate; it needs to be brought up in the campaign; it needs to be brought up in a number of different ways.

The sad part is that the government doesn't have the courage to stand up and say, "This is what we're about," but the facts stand for them. The facts stand in place of their resolve, in place of their courage, in place of their straight talk. They have indeed stripped down public education. Let's look at the underfunding. The current Finance Minister, the former Minister of Education, and successive Ministers of Education have stripped down the public education system, and they've done that in a way that even their own hand-picked, appointed inquiry found that this government, quite apart from annual increases, had taken out \$1.7 billion that had to be replaced just to live up to their own policies—no one else's ambitions for public education. There was \$1.7 billion missing, left out, taken away from the children in public schools in this province, taken away in their textbooks, taken away in their larger classes, taken away in their teaching quality, taken away in their support and taken away in their special education support. All around the province, in every community, we had this government deducting support.

That's what Dr Rozanski found. It's there in black and white. He said that the gap between what boards had to pay and what this government is prepared to fund is the most serious problem, and he said, "Fix it." He said to this government that there's a \$1.7-billion hole as of August 31 of last year. It was so bad that Dr Rozanski said to this government, "Even though you've announced your funding for this year, it doesn't count. You've dug all the students in this province a huge hole, and you've got to start filling it in, even in the current year," and that wasn't even part of his recommendations. The government tries to claim that any money they spend on education is part of fixing the big hole they have for students, but it's not true. The Minister of Finance knows it's not true because the Minister of Finance was the Minister of Education through a number of these years. But they are pretending, her budget pretends and a number of the government's documents pretend that they're responding to Dr Rozanski.

We'll be able to demonstrate conclusively that this government has only committed to 30%—not delivered; promised—of the remedy that Dr Rozanski said was needed for essential public education services. What does that mean? It means that this government gleefully takes away over \$650 from every single student in publicly

funded schools that their own investigator said is needed for their essential education. They do that with equanimity because it's part of their plan; it's part of the outlook. It may not be shared by every single member, but we'll never know that because we won't hear that opinion represented here. There will be nobody standing up for public education on the government side. We've seen that. It took the former Premier to stand up for public education, because that's the only place we could find a Conservative who would do the job that needs to be done on behalf of students in this province.

We look at the turmoil, we look at the approach this government has taken to education: 25 million lost days for students. That compares to one quarter as much—it's four times the level of the two previous combined. This government has invented school turmoil. They have created conditions in which any reasonable parent would say, "Why is my child being subjected to this? I want to support public education but this government keeps picking battles with school boards and teachers. Don't they know how to fix anything?"

Yet we find out as well that the schools are crumbling: \$5 billion, according the Minister of Finance's former executive assistant in a memorandum, is acknowledged and confirmed by Dr Rozanski—denied then, but confirmed now as the deficit we have in falling-down infrastructure in our schools, the result of the deliberate neglect that this government has subjected our public schools to.

Yet, today in the House this government has the audacity to present us with a bill—a bill they want to pay, a bill for private schools. Let's have a look. How effective is this money going to be? How much social benefit will it deliver? On the one hand they're pulling money out of the public education system and refuse to put it back, even when their own independent investigator says it must be returned. They refuse to make that commitment. You look at their budget plan and you see there isn't a chance they could meet Dr Rozanski's requirements in less than 15 years. That's how little commitment there is to just doing the Band-Aid part of leadership in education, never mind the excellence that is truly required.

1700

What has happened this year with this vanguard, right-wing policy, this idea of a voucher, which you can't find anywhere else in Canada? What has happened with it? Now that it's out there, promoted by this government, what has been the response? Let's look at what happened at Albert College this year. Last year, Albert College charged \$29,000 in tuition. What are they charging this year? It's \$31,000. Appleby College was \$35,100 last year; this year they're going to charge \$36,850. Bayview Glen was charging \$17,100 last year; \$18,126 this year. Branksome Hall was \$16,060 last year; \$18,150 this year. The Country Day School was \$14,700 and is going up to \$15,950. Havergal College was \$15,900 and is going up to \$16,850. Holy Trinity School was \$13,600 and is going up to \$14,300. Toronto French School was \$16,900

and is going up to \$17,750. Trinity College School was \$31,750 and will be \$33,750 next year.

What's the average of those increases? It's \$1,400. There isn't a single benefit in those 10 private schools being delivered to parents or to families. It's all being captured by the elite private schools that this government wants to give public taxpayer dollars to. The tuitions are all going up. In anticipation of the initiative we have here today, they're just charging more. They're taking it right from the government and putting it into their operations. It's funding the private schools with no benefit to anyone. All the arguments being made across the way that there's some equity involved—look at the record. One thing I can guarantee, no matter how short or how long this government dares to make this particular debate, we won't see their figures. We won't see their studies. Why? Because successive Ministers of Education, the one who is currently Minister of Finance and the one who currently holds that title, have said on the record—if you can imagine this. They brought in this policy, they agreed to this policy, they supported this policy as advocates for public education and they didn't complete a single study about the impact of changing the face of education in this province with a public inducement to go to private schools—not one single study.

What kind of government would be that reckless? Only one that knows ahead of time what effect they want to cause. The government is fairly clear, fairly certain. They want to bolster the private school sector. They're very happy to have Albert College have \$2,000 more available to them. They're very pleased to see these increases, because that's what they have in mind, both at the high end—and they hope for some sort of medium end to get the next level of income going to private schools. It's a philosophy with which this party, the Ontario Liberal Party, disagrees entirely. We believe this government, in adopting this radical measure—the idea that we separate out people, those who can afford to buy education for their kids, some maybe even at a desperate level but driven there by the inadequacies that this government has allowed to develop in the public system.

These are families like Diane Allen's. Diane Allen is a parent of a private school student, and here's what she has to say:

"My husband and I stand to benefit from the proposal to grant tax credits to people who send their children to private schools.

"For the past four years, our son has attended a private school, at an annual cost of more than \$12,000 for tuition and books. We are not wealthy people by any means and have had to mortgage our future in order to pay these fees.

"However, we really have no choice. The public school system has been crippled by funding cutbacks since the Progressive Conservative Party came to power and is unable to meet his needs as a learning disabled, attention-deficit student.

"Despite the fact that the tax credits will bring us a bit of financial relief, I am completely opposed to them."

It's interesting that parents like that, parents like Diane Allen, are not the people this government has in mind. They have in mind a different kind of beneficiary, ones they hope they can collect from on voting day, and yet I would say that the value and the belief in the practicality of a functioning public education system is much more widely held than this government suspects. It may be very well disappointed in the cynical manoeuvre that would have them send all these dollars—\$500 million—to private schools at the direct expense of this system.

In the absence of studies from this government—this is a financial measure. Have we seen one study from the Ministry of Finance that tells us how much this is going to cost? No, because they're afraid of it. Why are they afraid of it? The former Minister of Finance, just in advance of his leadership tour when he attempted to become the leader of the Conservative Party, introduced this initiative without any prior warning. He raised this idea. He brought it up and said at the time, even though there had been very dramatic increases in private school enrolments, that there would be zero increases, that there would be no extra cost. There would be no increases at all, Mr Flaherty was on the record as saying.

You hear the minister opposite saying, "Well, it doesn't cost very much." In fact now, if you look in the Canadian Jewish News, you'll see that Mr Flaherty says it will cost \$175 million more. Mr Flaherty has now changed his mind and agrees that on top of the existing cost there will be another \$175 million. Where does that put you? You've got the government estimate of about \$350 million, and then another \$175 million. That's about \$500 million, and that's what Mr Flaherty sees happening.

Hon Mrs Ecker: No, it's not; it's \$300 million. You know that; you were briefed.

Mr Kennedy: Mr Flaherty says there will be a 25% increase in enrolment. He's on the record. He's a little bolder than the present finance minister, the member for Thornhill or any of the members who have spoken so far. They know what's happening. But they knew this already.

Because the diversion of children away from public schools, which has been the effective success—we've got to give them credit. They've managed to engineer a 50% increase in enrolment in private schools even before this was fully underway. They've managed to cut the increase in public school enrolment down to 5% from where it was, 9%. They've managed to have ten times the growth in private schools as in public schools. They've managed to succeed at that, but the 37,000 kids they've diverted have already cost the public system \$280 million in funding. That's what they would have received had they been in those schools. When we look at the 440 public schools this government has closed, there is a very strong implication in all of this. We have them talking about declining enrolment—

Interjections.

Mr Kennedy: The member opposite talks about declining enrolment. How about the 37,000 kids you took out of the public system and put in the private system, by

the way you have discouraged their parents from being there? That is indeed declining enrolment. The member opposite has got it right on. But it's declining enrolment from the declining commitment of this government to education in the public sense. It's declining enthusiasm on the part of these people, and frankly, it's declining effort. It's a lazy approach. Perhaps that's what motivated Mr Davis when he came out and said this is wrong.

Some of the members opposite, and some of them, sadly, in positions of responsibility, have tried to say, "Mr Davis, the former Premier, just happened coincidentally to be talking about vouchers." Well, in any analysis anywhere else—let's try, for example, the 26 US states that put this on the ballot. They called vouchers and tax credits the same thing. They are the same thing. What they are is dangerous. They're dangerous for a whole number of reasons, not the least of which is what they do to public schools, and that is what makes them attractive to this government.

Let's be very clear. This government from time to time has exploited minority religious concerns and has said, "We'll deal with those." Yet every one of the members opposite knows—while there may not be studies, we're pretty sure they have calculated this—that 60% of the students are not in minority religious schools. They know that 75% of the money is going to end up in non-religious, private, secular schools. Why? Because there's already a tax credit for religious schools, as there is for any religious activities, a tax credit from the provincial and the federal government. Because of that, the maximum benefit of this plan, the one we're being asked to approve today in Bill 53, goes to private, secular schools, including the ones I just named, which have hiked their tuition by some \$2,000 or \$1,500—an average, not co-incidentally, of \$1,400, the exact benefit this government wants to confer on them.

That is their plan, and they seem to be succeeding with it. But they, I think, stand exposed. I suspect if we'd had an election this might have worked better for them, because they would have done their narrowcasting. They would have sent a wink and a nod to the people they wanted to talk to, to believe they had their interests at heart. They would have said something else to the people out there who are worried, frankly, after eight years of this government bungling education and want to know what's going to happen for their kids.

That's exactly what we have to try to accomplish. People who care about public education have to get involved in this issue now. We need to show people there will be a significant reaction in this province to the idea of undermining public education. We need people to sustain their confidence. We know how hard it will be. There will be people out there looking at their young children and saying, "Do I want them to go through what the Conservatives have put them through? Do we want to lose another 25 million days?" And people will say, "No."

1710

The interesting thing is, I believe this idea of public education is so strong out there. I have a four-year-old,

and that four-year-old might need the highest level of support in public education, which is an ISA 3, and that might amount to a certain number of dollars. Someone else's child, someone opposite, might need very little support, might need \$1,200 worth of support because they're ready to learn and they've got everything they need. Both of these are hypothetical, but they're not hypothetical in the sense that they exist. This is the point of public education. We pool our challenges and our possibilities.

This government would change that. They would hive off people. They would send people away from public education. They would no longer have us do the things that many, many people in this province work very hard to make possible: equalized opportunity. Make it based on your ability and willingness to work. This government would change that. They would have more and more exclusiveness. They would have more and more separateness, more and more apartness. That's where this is.

Let's look at the measure in question, because some of the members opposite may not have examined it in detail. They may think it's something that it's not. This is a voucher program in every single respect except name. What does it do? Anyone in the province with any qualifications whatsoever, with five children in instruction of any kind can get \$3,500 from this government per child. Anyone. There is no qualification whatsoever on who that person teaching is. None whatsoever. There is no qualification.

To quote from the ministry materials, "When it comes to elementary schools, we don't even visit them." They don't even look at the elementary schools that they propose to send \$3,500 to. They don't go in there. They just put them on their Web site. As many people found out, thanks to the diligence of people like the member from Eglinton-Lawrence, some of these schools go bankrupt, and then who stands up for them? Only opposition members, because the government doesn't deal with it.

They've thrown this at anything; any five students will get this tax credit. Will have they accredited teachers? No, they won't. The government will not make those teachers be accredited. They will stand as the only government in Canada that gives money outside the public system for non-accredited teachers—the only one.

Will they teach the curriculum? They've made a big deal, spent a fair bit of your money, Mr Speaker, everyone's money, on advertising a new curriculum. Does this new curriculum apply in these private schools they want to send your tax dollars into? It doesn't. There's no requirement to carry any kind of curriculum whatsoever; none at all.

Is the government subjecting them to tests? Do they look at what their \$3,500 of taxpayers' money is going to get in these unusual private schools? Because it can be anything; it's not just the ones people may be familiar with. It can be any school. They've thrown them all together. No; no testing. There's no requirement. They have standardized tests and they're not requiring them.

Sadly, the government won't even require the most minimal requirements. For example, they ask for a criminal background check as the only thing in common for what they put as an onus on the public system, and then you don't have to hand that in anywhere. There is nobody who is going to check whether that criminal background check actually found a criminal.

Worse is the fact that when the Robins report came through and this government was responsible for implementing the Robins report, looking at the risks for young children in school settings, they would not accept an amendment to make it apply to private schools.

What is this about? Why on the one hand does this brand of Conservatives act like the Soviet politburo when it comes to trying to run schools? They've taken over school boards in Ottawa, in Hamilton, in Toronto. They're stripping them down. They're taking services away. They kicked seniors out of their programs. They've kicked basketball teams out of the gyms after school. They've removed youth counsellors. They've taken away attendance counsellors. Can you imagine? Here in Toronto they want 28 people to look after the needs of 280,000 students when it comes to not being in school. Just two weeks ago we had a call from a teacher in Scarborough who found a truant student, a 12-year-old, who had been missing from school for 32 days. He went to find him himself on his own time because there was nobody available any more from the Toronto school board to look for students who have gone astray. Yet this government would have that child be lost for good, because they aren't prepared to put the dollars into public education to make sure the basic support services are there.

Mr Phillips: Shame.

Mr Kennedy: It is a shame. It is a choice, though. It is a choice that the people of the province need to be making, not when this government gets the courage for an election, because that could be some time, but right now. They need to get involved in this Bill 53. They need to take whatever opportunity, whatever glimpse of its real agenda this government wants to provide, because they need to know.

There are no standards for this money, and that's bad. It's not a good idea. It's a very poor way to spend government money. Once upon a time they used to sing a different song on the other side, and they used to talk about accountability. But we've learned what that means. It means for everyone else; it doesn't mean for them.

Why would they do this? Why would they have no standards to be met whatsoever? Why would they send this money out in such a reckless fashion? Because they want to engender a certain response. They want to see a private school system set up and fostered in a whole bunch of different ways. If you look at last year, we had 42 new private schools register with this government. That's double the rate of the year before. This government is bringing on private schools.

Mr Wood: That's good news.

Mr Kennedy: I give the member for London West credit. The member says, "Good news." The member for

London West wants to undermine the public education system. He has not put it on the record yet, but at least he is going to speak to that in this House. Most of the other members won't do that. Most of the other members are not proud of the track record that has increased private school enrolment by 50%—10 times the growth in the public system—which has diverted kids from the public system and damaged that system, which has closed schools that provided excellent education in rural settings, in inner cities, in a range of settings in this province. They have accelerated the declining enrolment in those places and sent those parents and communities into a tailspin.

Now, around the time of a putative election, we hear some backtracking. But people know better. They know this government has shut down 440 public schools. They know they've built fewer schools than any other government. We hear different numbers from the government, but at the end of the day we can prove—and I challenge all the members opposite to put your figures down. You have built fewer schools per year than any government in the last 12 years, and you have closed more. That's what you've done.

Hon Mr Klees: That's absolutely wrong.

Mr Kennedy: Well, put them out there. I say to the member opposite, you will not be able to run away from the fact that you have grown the private school system and you intend—and this is another member who might actually admit to this—to grow it even further. That's what this is about. You want to grow the private system and strip down the public education system. You've done that.

Mr Klees, I think, is probably somebody who will be in that cohort of the government that might actually say that publicly. I give him credit for that, because there is at least a basis for debate. But that's not the face the government wants to put on it. They want to send signals to certain people out here. They've taken hostage people who are conscientious objectors in certain religious groups and said, "We want to exploit you; we want to use your concerns to promote this other ideological system." They haven't told all those people exactly how it works. It benefits private secular schools and does it in a way that offers no controls. There is nothing, for example, to control what people are being taught. People can teach anything. No one will know what's being taught with public money.

In this diverse society we have permitted private schools, and we should, but not with government money. This is the new change. This is what the government has put in front of us as their best effort. They weren't up to the challenge of fixing public education, of making that work. They've backed away from that challenge today with this lazy-as-possible common denominator, this last-resort bill that would simply take the underfunding, the turmoil, the reckless attitude they've had toward public education and roll it up in an incentive for people to depart.

I want to say to the public out there, don't fall for this—not just for the bad policy, because we understand

people are seeing through this, but for the idea that you should be discouraged about public education just because of what this government has done. This government does not have the right to set the tone and crush the expectations of two million kids. They have already been derelict in their responsibilities. We have 100,000-plus, about 130,000, curriculum casualties. We have kids out there who have been receiving no assistance whatsoever to do better at things like the literacy test. Again, at the 11th hour, on the way out the door, this government tries to announce something. That is completely and sadly unacceptable. This government cannot ignore its responsibilities and not be held to account, because all the way along that's what this has been about.

This government is not trying to create some new paradigm in schools. They will let anyone collect this money; anyone whatsoever will be able to get it. Look at the standards they ask for, and they basically are saying, "Post your information on the Web site." I've heard the member opposite from time to time say, "The parents will know." That's exactly and precisely their attitude. They would say that around this province it is total laissez-faire. There will be no referee; there will be nobody looking after the public interest; there will be nobody.

As at least one of the members opposite is saying, it will be direct, and it will be directly against public education, because the principle and the philosophy are different. There must be now a working majority in the caucus and the government that's in favour of bringing down public education, promoting the private alternative, and splitting up the sides. They won't find that in the province.

1720

The Deputy Speaker: It is now time for comments and questions.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): You've heard from the rest; in 10 minutes you're going to hear from the best, as Rosario Marchese from the riding of Trinity-Spadina takes the floor as the New Democrats' education critic, as a member of a caucus and a party that is absolutely committed to full public funding of our public, Catholic and colloquially public school systems.

Rosario, raised in a Catholic family, has a close and intimate personal affinity with Catholic education. I know that he has been an advocate for Catholic funding and, more importantly, for the survival of the Catholic school system in the province. One of the concerns that Rosario Marchese has is that this government will do through the back door what politically it wouldn't dare do through the front door to the Catholic funded system. Rosario was there when Catholic teachers were under attack, and he'll be there for Catholic and non-Catholic families in the fight to ensure full funding of a public education system. I'm proud to have Rosario Marchese as a colleague. I'm proud to have Rosario Marchese out there in solidarity with teachers and their unions. He demonstrated that solidarity when Rosario led the fight to protect the right of Catholic teachers to collectively

bargain and when Rosario condemned the corrupt Catholic board for their lockout of teachers who wanted to be at work and wanted to be able to negotiate.

Rosario Marchese, 10 minutes. Then you'll hear a speech.

Hon Tina R. Molinari (Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I am pleased to rise in this debate and make some comments on the speaker from Parkdale-High Park.

I want to start off by saying that no one, absolutely no one, on this side of the House has done anything to undermine public education, and I'm sorry to say that I can't say the same for the other side of the House. When the speaker talked about undermining public education, it's all the fearmongering they do that undermines public education, not our policy.

Feedback from sound system.

Hon Mrs Molinari: What our policy does is it promotes choice for families; it promotes choice for those who choose to send their kids to something other than the publicly funded system. Thornhill is a riding that has a lot of private schools. In Thornhill, as a matter of fact, there are parents who have come to me consistently telling me how important this is to them.

Interjections.

Hon Mrs Molinari: It's not just in Thornhill, but it's other areas in the province. York Centre is another riding; St Paul's, Eglinton-Lawrence. The members should really listen to what those people are saying.

As far as criteria, I was involved in the consultation process that developed the criteria for schools to be eligible for tax credits, so I want to make it clear that there are criteria. The members of the opposition should look at what the criteria are and be assured that they do have to follow the criteria stipulated in order to get the education tax credit.

I want to congratulate the former Minister of Finance, Jim Flaherty, for introducing the very valuable initiation of this tax credit, and the Minister of Education at the time, Janet Ecker, who was involved in the process. On this side of the House, we don't undermine public education; we support choice.

The Deputy Speaker: I'll remind the members that there is no talking back and forth. The sound that you thought you heard was a freighter coming up University. It's kind of foggy, and it was a foghorn. I just wanted you to know.

The Chair recognizes the member for Eglinton-Lawrence.

Mr Colle: I just want to congratulate the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, Gerry Phillips, and the member for Parkdale-High Park, Gerard Kennedy, for their passionate defence of students and parents who are in our public education system because they've been abandoned by this government, who has put them through eight years of reckless cuts, crises and conflicts. That has been a real shock to the parents who feel that this government has done nothing but negatively impact their children. There's no excuse for them. That's what they've done,

and the record is clear. If you talk to parents, they'll tell you what this government has done to public education and to children. It's shameful, what they've done. It's shameful, what this government did.

The member for Parkdale-High Park mentioned a St James Academy school, which was in my riding at Caledonia and Lawrence. This government allowed the school to be operated by one of the most notorious con artists in this country, who had a criminal record of fraud and deception. It took two years of begging this government to do something to close that down. They wouldn't do it. They let this person take money from parents with disabled-learning children. They wouldn't stop him. This man was stealing money from parents of disabled children. He was operating a school in a warehouse with substandard conditions and this government did nothing to stop St James Academy. That's what the public is afraid of. Will this government tolerate more St James Academies and do nothing while children and their parents are abused by these fly-by-night operators? That's what this government will not protect the parents from.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation): There was a time when Liberals believed in a few things. Well, they don't any more. The equity in education tax credit is about diversity in our society. If you believe in diversity in our schools—the Liberals don't believe in diversity. The equity in education tax credit is about parental choice. One would think the Liberals believed in the parents' choice for their families. Liberals don't believe in parental choice in education in Ontario. They believe the state knows better. They believe Big Brother know better than parents in Ontario about how their children should be educated.

The equity in education tax credit stands for equality of opportunity. It's not just rich people who have the choice, rich Liberals in Ontario who can send their children to fancy schools, Mr Phillips and his friends on the other side of the House. There's choice for people who have lots of money in Ontario. Sure, they can send their children to these independent schools that are expensive. But what about middle-class people? What about people who work in this province who, for religious, cultural or other reasons, after they've paid all their public school taxes, want to dig into their own pockets and are prepared to pay more money for their children to have independent education? Liberals don't believe in equality of opportunity.

They do believe in one thing, and that has become quite apparent over the last several years. They believe in big unions, they believe in big spending and they listen to the union leaders. I can tell you that they believe in one thing: subservience to big union leaders in Ontario. Shame; you should believe in parents and the power of parents.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Parkdale-High Park has two minutes to respond.

Mr Kennedy: The red scare is back. The red scare is alive and well in the member for Durham. We now see

where the alien ideas come from. The head author of the alien is here.

The member opposite talks about choice. The choice they want in Ontario is to take their kids to a public school—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. There's no shouting back and forth. If you want to talk to somebody over there, go and talk to them. Otherwise, leave, or I'll help you.

The member for Parkdale-High Park.

1730

Mr Kennedy: It is indeed clear: the choice this government has taken away from parents is to have their kids go to a school, not be worried about the turmoil, not be worried about the cutbacks, not be worried about the things this government has taken away from them. Now they stand exposed. They stand exposed to this gentleman's ideas. Some people will talk about it publicly. They want to undermine public education. All you need to do is pin on your fridge what Mr Flaherty just said. The fearmongering that they talk about—they took over the Toronto board, and 3,000 kids didn't show up. That's fearmongering, but from whom?

What did they do in that board? What have they done to contain apprehension in that board? They have cut service after service after service. They have exploited, as the members opposite have done consistently here, some of the needs that were brought up by the United Nations. They're on one side of the issue, and then they go on the other side of the issue when it's convenient for them. When one of the members opposite had a leadership campaign, he was there. Then the government backed off, and now that they're at a campaign and they need that narrow vote again. They want it back.

Even that constituency has got to ask themselves: how much real conviction is this? How much is this a government that is so politically needy, so desperate, they put themselves in the hands of people that at least half of this caucus, the Bill Davis kinds of people—there are probably not that many left over there—doesn't believe in? The others may believe in it, but they should never be running public education in the province again.

Mr Gill: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent of the House to pass third reading of my bill, Bill 2.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Agreed? There is not.

Further debate.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I am happy to have this opportunity to beat up on the government, because it's fun to do, particularly with bills of this—

Mr Kormos: It's easy.

Mr Marchese: And it's easy—particularly with bills of this kind. I have half an hour today, Thursday, 5:30. I'll come back next Monday, hopefully, and I will have yet another half-hour. I drool at the prospect of beating them up again.

Mr Kormos: Drool.

Mr Marchese: I do drool at the prospect. Those of you watching, stay tuned, because what I have to say, quite frankly, is going to be actually very critical of the Conservative government and a bit critical of the Liberals too, because I've got some quotations here that I want to share with you good people watching.

I want to read from the document that the Minister of Finance read to us but a few short days ago.

Mr Kormos: Why?

Mr Marchese: Because it's instructive.

Mr Kormos: Is it helpful?

Mr Marchese: It will be helpful to the Tories.

The Deputy Speaker: I realize you'd like to have a conversation with your House leader, and if you'd like to, go ahead. I'll let the clock run, but it's awfully hard for me to keep others from talking if you're going to talk with him. I would ask that you address your comments through the Chair, please.

Mr Marchese: I thought the issue was for the speaker—me—to be able to keep up with the interruptions, rather than you listening. But, Speaker, please, I enjoy the debate that comes from all sides, any side; I really do. It doesn't interrupt me at all. Anyone can feel free, including the Speaker, to make comments about anything I say at any time, because I like it.

Here's what the Minister of Finance said a couple of days ago: "I believe that one of the most important tasks of any government is to provide a strong public education system for our children, and our government has done this under the leadership of former Premier Harris and now Premier Eves." Minister Ecker said, "We have set higher standards through more rigorous curriculum, and we have implemented standardized testing so we can ensure our children are learning what they need to achieve their potential to succeed." I'm not sure that reads well. "We've created report cards.... We've established standards for the professional development and performance appraisal of teachers in the classroom."

Here's the problem, Minister. When you talk about implementing standardized testing so you can ensure your children are learning, the question I have of you is, why don't you apply the same standard for the private system? Why would you have a double standard, one for the public system and one for the private system? Why would you give my money, that I don't want you to give away, to a private system without any strings attached? How could you and the minister beside you be proud of that?

Hon Mr Flaherty: It's not your money.

Mr Marchese: Minister Flaherty, it's my money.

Hon Mr Flaherty: It's not your money.

Mr Marchese: Minister Flaherty, it's my money.

Hon Mr Flaherty: That's the problem with you people. You think it's your money.

Mr Marchese: Yeah, it is my money. Monsieur Flaherty, Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation, says it's not my money. Well, when you give a tax credit that comes out of consolidated funds, it's my

money and the money of every citizen who pays PST, who pays user fees and who pays income tax. Their money, and my money that I disagree with your sending to private schools, is going to the private schools in ways that are not accountable. You are giving citizens' money away to private schools without any accountability, without any strings attached. We think that's dumb politics and it's dumb policy. Taxpayers—because that's the way you like to refer to citizens—who respect you or like you, I am convinced, do not like to have their money being sent to private schools in ways that are not accountable.

Hon Mr Flaherty: It doesn't go to schools; it goes to parents.

Mr Marchese: I disagree with you, Minister Flaherty, that this money, even if it goes to parents, somehow is not your money or mine. You will not be able to fool the public in any way whatsoever when you try to convince them that somehow this money that comes from government and goes to parents isn't my money or the taxpayers' money or the money of citizens. Following this debate, you're going to have a heck of a time explaining to anyone in your hometown that it's not their money you're using.

Hon Mr Flaherty: No problem at all.

Mr Marchese: I tell you, Minister: you guys are going down, and you're going down fast. It's these kinds of policies that are going to bring you down, and rightfully so.

Minister Ecker, who had to step out for a few moments, but I'm sure will be back, said, "We will also pass regulations," imagine, "to require independent schools to assess student achievement in the core subjects of reading, writing, and mathematics and to share that assessment with parents." How magnanimous, Minister Ecker, that you will now, by regulation, require those independent schools to assess student achievement and share that knowledge with the parents. You're so very kind. I'm sure parents want to know.

What you don't tell them, Minister Ecker, wherever you are, is that they in those private schools—religious and non-denominational—will not have to write the same tests, the same assessments that every grade 3, grade 6, grade 9 and grade 10 student has to write. They are not compelled to do that. What the government requires independent schools to do, and what Minister Flaherty under duress now requires independent schools to do, through regulation, is assess student achievement. It doesn't tell us how; they will just be required to do it somehow. Every student in grade 3, grade 6 and grade 9 has to write a standardized test; there's no way out of it. But Minister Flaherty doesn't see that as a problem. He believes the public system needs to have those standardized tests because, you see, that's rigorous, but in the private system, they don't have to do that. A curious thing. Why would that be the case?

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Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Member from Northumberland, ask the minister. Explain yourself, Minister. Help me to understand, because I don't. I'm convinced the member from Northumberland understands the argument intellectually. He must be profoundly confused by the contradiction. But perplexed as he might be, he cannot escape the fact that his front benches have forced the member from Northumberland to accept the reality that he's stuck with the fact that Minister Flaherty introduced this when he was the Minister of Finance, and you've got to live with that, whether you like it or not.

Mr Colle: The member from Northumberland has good instincts.

Mr Marchese: He's got good instincts, animal instincts; I know. He knows when an issue like this is going to affect him and affect him dearly.

Member from Northumberland, do the teachers have to be assessed, have to write tests, have to undergo teacher testing, in the same way teachers do in the public system? Member from Northumberland, I ask you, do you know? Do you care? You seem to care, member from Northumberland and Minister Flaherty, that in the public system teachers have to undergo tests, as you call them. There are 14 courses: seven obligatory and seven elective. But teachers in the private system I guess do not have to undergo this rigorous development because, presumably, they are better achievers, better teachers, are in the private system and therefore need not be scrutinized, need no professional development, because they are at the height of their development. Do you understand, member from Northumberland, that we've got a problem?

I'm sure the Minister of Transportation, in his neck of the woods, has a problem he can't deal with because, you see, they are two contradictory positions. In my view, when your government gives away public dollars—my money—without any strings attached, I say to you that is a public wrong. That is policy that is ill-conceived. That is politics that is crass. It is so obvious why you are doing it, and it's crass; not intelligent. When you look at the contradictions, it's indefensible.

There are so many in the private system who do not have the qualifications, and you make no bones about that. It doesn't seem to affect you. In the private system it doesn't matter, I suppose. Many teachers in the private system are unqualified because they are not certified. Many of those teachers and non-teachers do not have to have any professional development or testing. They do not have to have the qualifying test for those teachers who are about to teach. They do not have to write a qualifying test. Students do not have to write the standardized tests in grades 3, 6 and 9. All they are required to do at those schools is simply do some assessments; that's all.

Minister Flaherty, the Minister of Innovation, could not come back to this House with anything innovative to make this bill better. The Minister of Opportunity could not come up with any opportune idea that would help those teachers, who presumably struggle similar to those

in the public system, with any professional development idea that might make me feel good. The Minister of Enterprise—the same person—could not come up with any enterprising idea that could help those parents in the private system come up with some assessment tool that would be rigorous enough, similar to the one public kids have to write, to make parents and those students better, as they claim they're doing with students in the public system.

Minister of Transportation and member from Northumberland, do you see the problems I'm having?

Hon Mr Klees: You're having problems all right.

Mr Marchese: Of course I'm having problems, Minister of Transportation, because I'm trying to—

Hon Mr Klees: Can I make a suggestion?

Mr Marchese: Please.

Hon Mr Klees: Change your position on this.

Mr Marchese: The Minister of Transportation says that if I were to change my position and willingly give my money to private schools, it would make him feel better. I know that.

What I'm trying to tell you is, when you get around in that transportation system you're trying to improve after all these eight years, and you get off at any one of the GO stations, the streetcars, whatever, please talk to a couple of people and say, "Look, we're giving your money away for private kids. How do you feel about that? Do you like it?" Ask them the question, "We're not testing teachers there because we don't have to. Do you like it?" Teachers in the public system have to—I referred to you by your right label. Why are you up and on what point? He's up on some point.

Hon Mr Klees: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would actually request unanimous consent so that I could give an explanation to the honourable member of really how this program works.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there consent? There is no consent.

The Chair recognizes the member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr Marchese: I am going to explain how the system works, and I've got plenty of time to tell him how it works.

Hon Mr Klees: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I think the record should show that it was the honourable member who said no; he really doesn't want to understand.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order. The member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr Marchese: The problem is that your policy's indefensible. Ninety-five per cent of all our children are in public schools. Minister of Innovation, that's diversity. When 95% of our kids are in public schools, that speaks to the richness, the strength, the vitality of diversity in a public system.

Hon Mr Flaherty: Just like the Soviet Union—state schools.

Mr Marchese: I'm not so sure. I'm not sure I'm advocating a position that's way out of whack with Liberals, even, and Tories, even, because I'm convinced

many of your members don't support you in this, by the way. It's hardly a Soviet Union position. By the way, I wasn't a big fan of the Soviet Union. But dare I say, Minister of Innovation, that the policies you have adopted are more Soviet Union-like than anything we New Democrats have ever done. Let me explain how, if you're curious to know. He's not interested, but I will tell him anyway.

When he centralized education financing and took the power away from boards of education, that was Soviet Union centralization of power unlike anything we've ever seen, but perhaps the Minister of Enterprise might not make the connection. But a centralized, planned economy, which was the Soviet Union, and a centralized education system where boards have little power left: that is Soviet Union-like. You appreciate the comparison, Minister?

Hon Mr Flaherty: No, it's very poor, actually.

Mr Marchese: Very poor. Come on, Jim, you don't know what you're talking about. I'm telling you. I gave you a comparison that's as clear as a blue sky on a nice summer day, and you're saying to me that's a poor comparison. Please, come on.

Hon Mr Flaherty: You still want to dictate to parents.

Mr Marchese: I'm dictating? No, what I'm saying to you is this: that diversity is in the public system, that choice is in the public system. I'm saying to you, Jim, Minister of Innovation, if you know parents who want to have choice, let them have their choice and let them pay for their private education.

Hon Mr Flaherty: What if they can't pay?

Mr Marchese: Let the rich pay for their own private schools.

Hon Mr Flaherty: What about middle-class people?

Mr Marchese: Let the middle-class people go. If they want to leave our system and pay for their own private education on their own, not my business, not my problem.

Hon Mr Flaherty: You just said it, "our system."

Mr Marchese: Minister of Innovation, are you abandoning our public school system? Are you saying my public system is just mine, not yours? I thought you were defending the public system. I thought you people were for a strong public system, but you just told me, "my system"—as if it's my public system and not yours. Which of these two systems do you believe in? Do you believe in a public system or do you believe in a private system? Which one do you believe in? You made it very clear to me that the one you believe in is the private one, not the public one. You leave very little room for choice.

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He's not listening to me, so I'll talk to the taxpayers, those who like the Minister of Innovation, those who like the Minister of Transportation, those who like the member for Northumberland. I'll talk to those taxpayers. I've got no problem with that. I'd like to talk to them very directly.

Taxpayers—those of you who like to be referred to that way—this government has already given \$50 million

to \$60 million of your money and mine away to private schools. With this year's announcement, he's giving away another 50 or 60 million bucks, and the following year he's going to give away another \$50 million or \$60 million of your money and mine. It's going, yes, to religious systems and to places like Montessori schools and to private schools like Upper Canada College. I often use Upper Canada College, not because I dislike them but because they're close by, very near to us. They're now paying 16,000 bucks to get into those schools.

Do you think, Madame Taxpayer, that \$16,000 per child is a lot? Not a lot? Too much? Do you think, Monsieur Taxpayer, that \$16,000 would go a long way toward helping you pay your rent? Maybe. Do you think that 16,000 bucks could pay your mortgage, perhaps very hefty? Do you think it might be able to pay for your old age and home services that some of you might need? Do you think these rich men and women, who pay \$16,000 per child in tuition fees, need your help, need my help? No, they don't.

The Minister of Innovation is saying to you that when \$60 million of our money goes out every year, it's OK. It's your money, taxpayers, those of you who are Conservative-Alliance types who like to be called taxpayers; \$60 million last year, \$60 million this year is coming out of your little, tiny pockets to go to private schools. Do you like that? I don't.

Hon Mr Flaherty: There is nothing going to private schools. It goes to parents.

Mr Marchese: It goes to subsidize parents, Minister of Innovation. Oh, what a thrill it was for the Minister of Innovation that I should acknowledge that your money and mine is going to parents. Yay.

Applause.

Mr Marchese: Even my friend Carl DeFaria clapped this time around.

Hon Mr Klees: We're proud of you.

Mr Marchese: I know you are. Carl, what riding are you from?

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Oh well, Minister of Citizenship. They all clap when I say your money is going to parents and not to private schools, as if your money that goes to these parents is not going to the private schools. What a remarkable distinction that the Minister of Innovation makes. Therefore, 60 million bucks that goes to parents is OK, he argues, because it's going to parents who are sending their kids to private schools. He laughs and says, "Ha," and claps and says, "Yay, he got it right."

I appeal to your good sense and good instincts, good taxpayers, for you to come to your own conclusion about giving \$120 million, so far, to parents who send their kids to schools like Upper Canada College, where the tuition fees are 16,000 bucks. The Minister of Innovation says it's OK.

Hon Mr Flaherty: What's the monetary limit?

Mr Marchese: It doesn't matter what the limit is. You know I like it. You keep it coming, Minister of Innovation. Madame Taxpayer, Monsieur le Taxpayer, Mon-

sieur Flaherty says to you, "How much money is going to these parents?" Up to \$3,500 will go to each parent for each student. So far, \$120 million has been taken away from your pockets to give away to parents who will send their little kiddies to places like Upper Canada College, where they spend \$16,000 a year to get there.

Hon Mr Flaherty: What about the Christian, Jewish and Muslim schools? Let's hear about them.

Mr Marchese: You will. I say, 95% of all of our students in Ontario are in the public system that you, Minister of Innovation, respect and love and adore. You and the finance minister next to you, who hasn't been able to come back yet to listen to my speech, love the public system. They love the fact that 95% of our students are in our public system.

At one point, acknowledges the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, that minister said that to give away \$300 million—I believe it was \$300 million, and I forget if Harris said \$500 million. The two of them combined said that to give away \$300 million or \$500 million would be to fragment our public education system.

Hon Doug Galt (Minister without Portfolio): You're doing a fine job.

Mr Marchese: Ciao, ciao, member for Northumberland. Nice to see you. See you later.

Minister of Finance Ecker and the former Premier said that close to \$500 million is going to go away and that if we do that, it will fragment public education. Boy, did they love public education then. Now they lost the fervour, although they still claim to love public education. It's right here at the top of their mind. It's on the front burner, as it were. Always there: ready to test kids in grade 3, grade 6, grade 9, grade 10; unwilling to test kids in the private schools because it just doesn't matter. When you give away your public dollars to the private schools, they can carry it away in wheelbarrows and it doesn't matter, because we don't have to worry about them.

But taxpayers, I tell you, you have to worry about the \$120 million taken out of your pockets and given away to parents who will send them to private schools, denominational and non-denominational. While it is true that the bulk will go to non-denominational schools, much of that money as well, perhaps to a lesser extent, will go to other religious groups.

New Democrats do not support this. We believe, like the Minister of Finance, that to do so is to fragment our system and to fragment our society socially and philosophically. It's a mistake. We are unequivocal about this.

While I agree with the member from Scarborough-Agincourt when he attacks the former Minister of Finance and attacks the former Premier, Liberals have not been too clear on this. I'm sorry to say that. I have some quotes.

My friend Gerard Kennedy—I call him my friend now because we are often at so many meetings debating together.

Mr Kormos: You two guys are really tight.

Mr Marchese: We're tight like this. I quote Gerard when he said in 2001—all these quotes are from 2001. "He contends that funding for religious schools doesn't necessarily mean less money for the public system. Both can be accommodated. When asked how, he says, 'We don't have the answer to that at this time.'"

Mr Kormos: When did he say that?

Mr Marchese: May 5, 2001, Now magazine.

Michael Bryant, the Liberal energy critic: "I can't suck and blow on this tax credit. I've got to support this. It's a step in the direction of equity. So I support that."

Mr Kormos: When was that?

Mr Marchese: That was the Toronto Star, May 12, 2001.

Even Kathleen Wynne, a Liberal candidate and school trustee, said, "Ontario people of one faith get preferential treatment in the school system." That's June 6, 2001.

Monte Kwinter, the Liberal critic for the Ministry of Innovation: "I've always supported full funding for faith-based schools. There should be some recognition in the

provincial tax regime. I'm personally delighted that that's happened. I don't think anyone accepts the argument that Catholic schools should be funded and others not." May 5, 2001.

Dalton McGuinty, Liberal leader: "I have said in the past that there is a fairness issue here regarding the funding of independent schools, and that is something that we recognize." The Toronto Star, May 16, 2001.

Unlike them, New Democrats are very clear on this. We have been very unequivocal. You will not find a quote from us that says we support tax credits for private schools of any kind. You will not find one—not then, not in the future—from this caucus.

We've run out of time.

The Deputy Speaker: We have tonight. Some other day you'll be able to take up exactly where you left off.

It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 next Monday.

The House adjourned at 1801.

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Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Sorbara, Greg (L)
Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC) Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances	Waterloo-Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC)
Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Whitby-Ajax	Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation / ministre de l'Entreprise, des Débouchés et de l'Innovation
Renfrew-Nipissing- Pembroke	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Willowdale	Young, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Windsor West / -Ouest	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
Sault Ste Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)	Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Dwight (L)
		York Centre / -Centre	Kwinter, Monte (L)
		York North / -Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)
		Mississauga West / -Ouest	Vacant

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Fourth Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Quatrième session, 37^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Monday 16 June 2003

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Lundi 16 juin 2003



Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 16 June 2003

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 16 juin 2003

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SUDBURY REGIONAL HOSPITAL

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I rise to inform the House and the people of Ontario that our Sudbury Regional Hospital still has not received capital construction money from the Harris-Eves government. So today I inform the Harris-Eves government, Minister of Health Tony Clement, and all the members on the other side that we have launched a northeastern initiative.

I have mailed out a notice of motion today that I would ask 85 groups across northeastern Ontario to pass. This is an approach that I took several years ago with regard to the four-laning of Highway 69. At that time, it forced the government to make a commitment, or at least an announcement.

Today we are employing the same strategy. We want this government to announce funding for the capital construction of the Sudbury Regional Hospital, a construction project that has been stalled for two years because this government chooses to ignore the funding dilemma within the Sudbury Regional Hospital Corp.

I thank Austin Davey, councillor for the city of Greater Sudbury, who will be bringing it to the council table to ask for support. The 85 other groups—be they business, labour, health care or educational sectors—are going to clearly tell this government, “It’s time that you people pay up. It’s time that the Sudbury Regional Hospital gets back on track. It’s time that this hospital is built.”

METIS CANOE TRIP

Mr AL McDonald (Nipissing): On June 5 I had the opportunity, along with other dignitaries including Lisa Pigeau-Crawford of the Metis Council and a group of northern Ontarians who were on hand, to meet the Metis Nation canoe expedition’s arrival in North Bay.

This canoe trip retraces the 2,000-kilometre historical canoe route employed by the voyageurs from the northwest some 200 years ago and shows the contribution of the Metis people to the early development of Ontario as they paddle through the communities along the way.

The journey began for the 10 voyageurs—including Travis Tessier, who was born in North Bay—on May 19 from the fur trade museum in Lachine national park in Quebec, paddling a 26-foot replica birchbark canoe 10 to 12 hours a day.

During their two-month trek, they will stop along the way at Ottawa, Pembroke, Deep River, Mattawa and North Bay. The North Bay stop has historic significance, as it has long-lasting ties with the fur trade and was part of the route taken by the voyageurs travelling west into the interior at the head of Lake Superior.

North Bay has also serviced trappers who brought furs from the rivers flowing south into Lake Nipissing. Today, North Bay is one of the few remaining hubs of the North American fur trade, which allows aboriginal people to preserve their traditional way of life and the history associated with it.

My congratulations to all the participants and voyageurs for making this voyage unforgettable.

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): We are always advised by consumer advocates and legal advisers to read the fine print before purchasing a product or service. That is sound advice not to be ignored. It is advice that should apply to Eves government announcements.

With the usual fanfare and blue backdrop, the Eves Conservatives in May 2002, under relentless pressure from the Ontario Liberal caucus and advocates for people with vision problems, finally, two full years after approval from Health Canada, approved funding for Visudyne for the treatment of macular degeneration, the leading cause of blindness after the age of 50.

Just as we are advised to read the fine print for commercial products, however, we should also read the regulations put in place subsequent to any big Conservative announcement. It turns out that very restrictive rules on who is eligible for OHIP-paid macular degeneration treatment mean that in reality only a fraction of those individuals suffering from this debilitating condition are assisted in covering this expense.

After two years of foot-dragging and excuse-making, over half of all patients must reach into their own pockets for very expensive treatment or risk losing their eyesight and their independence.

The lesson is clear: when the Eves Conservatives make a promise or long-term announcement, read the fine print. Unfortunately, those afflicted with macular

degeneration may be unable to do so unless they have the money to pay for a medically necessary treatment. Welcome to Ernie Eves's Ontario.

LEWIS PEARSALL

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): This weekend, I went to a celebration of the life of Lewis Pearsall, who died on Wednesday, April 30, 2003. Lewis Pearsall was a very dear friend of mine, but more importantly, he was a dear friend to the Riverdale community. We've all lost an activist and friend.

We were shocked when he died, even though he was 82 years old. He showed us all that getting older means getting better and better. I can't tell you in such a short time all the activities Lewis participated in, in the community. He was particularly fond of the Ralph Thornton Centre and put many of his efforts in there.

Just let me tell a few others: his involvement ranged from his participation in the original Toronto Community Ventures, which I started back in the early 1990s—that evolved into the Greater Riverdale Economic Action Together—the alternative curriculum for excluded students; he also helped create the Riverdale Community Development Corp and the Riverdale Community Business Centre, a process that took him over eight years. But Lewis never gave up.

Lewis was a handsome man with a wife whom he dearly loved, and five children. I want to take this opportunity to wish all of them well and extend my sympathies to my dear friend Cecile and their five children, Philip, Marc, Russell, LeeBari and Arlene.

Lewis, we miss you; but we know you're with us somewhere looking down.

1340

ITER FUSION PROJECT

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I'm pleased to rise in the House to support Durham riding constituents regarding the bid for the ITER fusion research facility. ITER is the international thermonuclear experimental reactor.

ITER is an \$18-billion international research project that will examine the next generation of clean, safe, sustainable energy. If Canada were successful in the ITER bid, we would have the opportunity to play a leadership role in the world's largest new international research project.

Consider some of the ITER advantages: thousands of person-years of employment, \$9.4 billion in direct foreign investment, a brain gain of some 250 international scientists, and expansion in key areas of technology and education.

I'm proud to say that the OPG Darlington site in Durham has proven itself to be an ideal location for this research centre. ITER has the full support of business and labour leaders, educators, elected officials and the general public. Just a few of the members' names would be

Mayor John Mutton of the municipality of Clarington, regional chair Roger Anderson, Gary Polonsky, president of Durham College, as well as Bill Harford, president of the Durham Region Labour Council. All Durham MPPs are on record as being in support of ITER. However, ITER is a project with benefits spanning beyond Durham region to Ontario and Canada. It's the next generation of energy technology.

The province of Ontario has had the foresight to agree to a \$300-million investment. However, we need the federal government to show the same level of commitment. Canada has an excellent chance of winning this bid if the federal government shows more support for ITER. On behalf of the citizens of Durham riding, I am asking the federal government to make an important investment in our future and the future of our children. I am calling on the province of Ontario and our fellow colleagues federally to work together in developing the winning bid to bring ITER to Canada.

KINGSTON GENERAL HOSPITAL

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): It was aggravating this weekend when I read this headline in the Kingston Whig Standard: "We are Being Ignored Says [Kingston General Hospital] Director Who Quit."

The article states that the board chair, Ian Wilson, has grown cynical about the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and its seeming indifference to the phenomenal local effort that has been made to get restructuring off the ground. In a letter written to the Minister of Health two months ago, Wilson described the board's grave concern about the complete absence of movement on hospital restructuring and the damage to patient care, hospital finances and morale the delay has caused.

Peter Leslie, professor emeritus at Queen's and member of the board of Kingston General Hospital, has also resigned. He cites that the board is more and more frustrated with the province's "ad hoc" system of hospital financing. He states that his resignation and his decision to explain himself publicly are intended to "rouse the ministry from its torpor." In his letter, Leslie also notes that Kingston General Hospital has been forced to consider cutting essential services to ensure its solvency, but refuses to imperil the status of KGH as a teaching hospital or risk closing the medical school.

It is absolutely unacceptable that this Tory government continues to ignore its responsibility to work with the local board to ensure quality services remain intact. Minister, stop ignoring KGH. Answer their letters. Pay what you promised. Their patients and their community deserve your support, not your neglect.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): One of the biggest accomplishments for the residents of Kitchener Centre has been the improvement in our health care community. Over the last eight years, our govern-

ment has taken the necessary steps to ensure that my constituents have access to the highest-quality health care in Ontario. St Mary's General Hospital is one of the best medical centres in the region. The successful campaign to save St Mary's General Hospital has given Kitchener the ability to deal with the needs of our community, including a growing and aging population.

Record investments in health care have given our hospitals the necessary tools to care for their patients. On June 6, our government announced \$420,112 in new funding for St Mary's hospital. This money will be used for a new cardiac technology called drug-eluting stents for cardiac patients. These drugs have been reported to improve outcomes in coronary angioplasty. Our government is funding the use of this new technology for cardiac patients who are at a high risk of suffering narrowing of the arteries after an angioplasty procedure. This technology could improve the quality of life for these patients, as the chances of a repeat procedure may be reduced.

In addition to the new cardiac care unit at St Mary's hospital, this new funding shows our government's continued commitment to improving accessibility to health care by enabling hospitals to deliver services closer to home. The residents of Kitchener Centre will benefit greatly from this new funding.

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): Last week, the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound said that Liberals don't care about families. Excuse me; he hasn't been paying attention.

Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals care about the growing number of families who have to rely on food banks.

Liberals care about children who suffer medical problems because of your weakening of environmental protection.

Liberals care about families with autistic children who are ignored after they turn six.

Liberals care about children who have to rely on school breakfast clubs for their first meal of the day.

Liberals care about families who despair about the lack of special education services for their children.

Liberals care about families on ODSP who must live \$8,000 below the poverty level.

Liberals cry for the lack of affordable housing, with 55,000 on the waiting list in Toronto alone.

Liberals share the worry of families who can no longer afford post-secondary education for their child.

Liberals are appalled by your government's support for school user fees, which means that children can no longer afford to play on the playground after school.

Liberals are deeply concerned for the families who cannot afford their electricity or gas bills. Liberals worry about families whose jobs are at risk because their employers can't afford your electricity bills.

Liberals wonder why you continue to block Rick Bartolucci's bill to allow the transfer of information between children's aid societies.

Liberals believe it is wrong that families have to worry that their water is safe.

Liberals care deeply about the many families whose total annual income is less than your House leader spent in Europe in one week.

To the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, your government's words say one thing, but your actions speak loudly of your neglect of families.

TOURISM IN NIAGARA

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): Unlike the member opposite, who just got up and said how much he cares about all these problems, the people on this side of the floor actually have solutions to these problems and actually address a lot of these problems.

Interjections.

Mr Maves: It's unusual for statements to be heckled when they haven't even let me say what I'm speaking about.

On Friday, Tim Hudak, the Minister of Consumer and Business Services, and the member from Erie-Lincoln and myself convened a tourism summit in Niagara to deal with the difficult year we're having in tourism throughout Canada and Ontario. Everyone who would be constructive was invited to this tourism summit.

There's a perfect storm happening right now. There are the difficulties with 9/11, there are difficulties with SARS, there are difficulties with the Iraq war and, of course, the very unfortunate statements made by the federal Liberals about our good American cousins, which have teamed together to cause difficult problems in tourism this year.

We got together with about 45 different people in the tourism industry, leaders from Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Port Colborne, Fort Erie and St Catharines, throughout the entire region.

Kudos go to all of those people who want to come together to take advantage of the province's \$128-million tourism recovery program and come up with a unified Niagara strategy to help tourism rebound in Niagara and get Niagara citizens back to work.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

COMPENSATION FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'INDEMNISATION DES VICTIMES D'ACTES CRIMINELS

Mr Duncan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 98, An Act to amend the Compensation for Victims of Crime Act / *Projet de loi 98, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'indemnisation des victimes d'actes criminels.*

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): The bill amends the Compensation for Victims of Crime Act to permit the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations requiring annual cost-of-living adjustments to awards made under this act.

There has not been a change in real compensation to victims of crime since 1986. This bill would provide, first of all, for regulatory power. Later today I will be tabling a resolution to increase the amount for victims on a one-time basis, because I can't do that through private bills.

It's time the government takes victims of crime seriously on these issues.

1350

DAY NURSERIES AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES GARDERIES

Mr Lalonde moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 99, An Act to amend the Day Nurseries Act to allow up to seven children to be cared for in rural areas without requiring a licence under the Act / *Projet de loi 99, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les garderies afin d'autoriser, dans les régions rurales, la garde de sept enfants au plus sans devoir obtenir un permis prévu par la Loi.*

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): The purpose of the bill is to exempt day nurseries and private home daycare agencies that receive or provide care for no more than seven children from the licence requirements of the act, if the nurseries or agencies are located in rural areas or in a town or village with a population of fewer than 3,500.

VISITORS

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I know that you and all members in the House would like to welcome, in the members' gallery visiting here today, Maryann Nargi of Chatham and Marnie Sutherland-Stein of Leamington.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I too have a point of order, Mr Speaker, although you may rule it out of order. I want to introduce Joe Witalis and his partner Sheila Foster. Joe lives in my riding and is here every single day for question period. I also want to introduce his mother, Anna Witalis, who is 84 years old. She took a train up from New York. She's a good

example to all of us. Look at her. Welcome. Thank you for coming today.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): We welcome our friends.

Hon Frank Klees (Minister of Transportation): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I too have two very special guests with me here today: Danielle and Cameron Healy from King township. Cameron is a student at St Andrew's College and Danielle is a student at Country Day School. They're here spending the day with an MPP to see what it's like. No doubt one of these days they'll be here themselves. Please welcome my guests today.

The Speaker: We welcome our people. The member for Durham was up first.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It is also my pleasure and privilege to introduce Richard Pentney, who is a member of the Smart Systems for Health Agency's board of directors. He's seated in the members' gallery. Richard is from Sudbury. It was my opportunity as PA to meet with him earlier today to discuss with him the great job of the delivery of health. I thank Richard for his work on the Smart Systems board.

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I wanted to take the opportunity to introduce Timothy Lewis, who is beside me here; the page's parents, who are in the west gallery, Jamie and Jane Lewis; his grandparents, Beth and Orm McGirr from Sundridge from my riding; and friend Kyle Wood, who are here today visiting.

The Speaker: We welcome the parents. You have a fine son. He's doing a wonderful job with us here today.

CONSIDERATION OF BILL 20

Hon Frank Klees (Minister of Transportation): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In light of a very serious incident over the weekend—four teenagers seriously injured as a result of road racing—we have before the House Bill 20, the Road Safety Act, 2003. In light of these circumstances, I would ask unanimous consent for second and third reading of this bill immediately, so that we can get on and have this important legislation in place in the province of Ontario.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We ask that it be referred to House leaders, which is the normal process. We weren't given any notice of this. There are a couple of items that I think would merit discussion at that point as well.

Hon Mr Klees: I'm pleased to refer this matter to the House leaders for discussion. It's such an important issue. I would ask, in that case, that the House leaders convene to discuss this possibility.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I appreciate that. Do you still want—

Interjection.

The Speaker: That's fine. OK. We hope the House leaders will be able to negotiate that, and we wish them luck in that endeavour.

ORAL QUESTIONS

FORMER MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Ms Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): My question is for the Deputy Premier. Last October, Cam Jackson was fired as minister because of his expenses. The Premier promised at that time a review of those expenses. In November, the Premier's office stated that the review was still not complete. Can you tell me, Minister, if the Premier's review of Cam Jackson's expense is complete? If so, what were the results of that review?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I don't have any information about the question that's just been asked by the deputy leader, but I will certainly Inquire and I will inform the House.

Ms Pupatello: Deputy Premier, I would like to add items for your perusal and perhaps you can get back to the House.

As you know, Cam Jackson was fired after it was discovered that he billed taxpayers more than \$100,000. Months before Jackson was fired, he attempted to repay \$7,600 of those expenses and say the matter was closed.

I have in my hands Cam Jackson's riding association filing. They show that Jackson didn't pay back those expenses himself; he got his riding association to pick up the tab instead. His riding association paid for expenses that had clearly been marked 'Personal,' as such, when he repaid them to the Legislature. They had so little to do with his work, in fact, that he lost his job for expensing them. Did the Premier's review cover the fact that Cam Jackson billed expenses to his riding association that were clearly personal?

Hon Mrs Witmer: As I said to the member opposite after the first question, I will take the question under advisement and we will prepare a response.

Ms Pupatello: Deputy Premier, I think you can see where we're getting here. If you do work on government business, then the ministry should cover those expenses. If you do work for your party, then your party covers those expenses. But if you go out to entertain yourself, you should be paying for it yourself. Cam Jackson clearly didn't do that. While sitting as a cabinet minister in Ernie Eves's government from August to October last year, Cam Jackson was sending his donors the bills for his personal expenses. Political donations, some from the groups and industries that he oversaw as Minister of Tourism, were being used to fluff up his personal lifestyle.

Minister, is this why we give tax credits for political donations, so that cabinet ministers can live this type of lifestyle? That's a serious question. We're looking forward to your opinion.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I would just like to share with the member opposite that I've been informed that the Premier's office has done a review, and my understanding is that they are presently in discussion with Mr Jackson on this particular subject.

MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): My question is to the government House leader with respect to this review by the Premier's office. Is the Premier's office aware of your European trip of last summer? Are they aware of the various sources that paid for the participants' expenses on that trip? Did they provide approvals for this practice?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): The question is before the Integrity Commissioner. I would wait for the report from the Integrity Commissioner.

Mr Bryant: The Integrity Commissioner is not looking at what the Premier's office knew or did not know. My question is about what you did, and I'm asking for an answer in this House. I don't think it's appropriate to use the Integrity Commissioner's deliberations as a shield to providing the answers. The question is, either you provided and disclosed to the Premier's office all the facts as to who paid for what on this trip and received approval, or you did not disclose all these facts to the Premier's office and withheld them for approval. Which one is it?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I think I'll wait for the Integrity Commissioner's report to comment any further on this issue.

1400

Mr Bryant: I say to the minister, you offered last Tuesday to release to the public the letter that you sent to the Integrity Commissioner that triggered his current deliberations. That was six days ago. I would have thought it would take about 60 minutes, not six days, to get your hands on that letter and disclose it to the public.

Why have you still not released a letter that you promised six days ago, and will you release the letter that you wrote to the Integrity Commissioner by the end of question period today?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I think, before I get into any undertakings, I'd like to see the report from the Integrity Commissioner.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): New question.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Reports in the Globe and Mail indicate that your special assistant, one John Koutoulakis, and his wife accompanied you on your now infamous, taxpayer-funded, five-star tour of Rome, Paris, London and Glasgow. I'm wondering what services Mr Koutoulakis provided that were so vital that you felt compelled to take him and his wife with you at considerable public expense?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I referred that issue to the Integrity Commissioner. I'll wait for his response.

Mr Hampton: I'm not sure that that particular issue was referred to the Integrity Commissioner.

I'll try again. I understand that Mr Koutoulakis has had quite a career trajectory. A few short years ago, I understand, he was selling cars. When you became Minister of Labour, you appointed your friend Mr Koutoulakis to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Appeals

Tribunal. That's an important job. It hears the appeals of injured workers whose lives are on hold.

Of the 23 appeal cases that Mr Koutoulakis heard, he didn't give a decision on 18. He heard the case and then never, ever bothered to give a decision. On five, he gave a decision that was four months late. One injured worker was forced to go on social assistance because Mr Koutoulakis didn't think it was important to give a decision in his case. So I ask you, Minister, why is the public paying for this man's visit to the Champs Élysées?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I'm pleased with Mr Koutoulakis's work. I've referred all the appropriate documents to the Integrity Commissioner and I await his response.

Mr Hampton: Minister, this is an ankle bracelet; your government advocates that it be used. I'm advocating that maybe we should put one on you so the public can keep track of your junkets and how much public money you're spending. We took a second look at your expense problems of last December. You remember: two of your staffers racked up \$3,300 in other expenses at a very trendy \$600-a-night, ultra-luxury Manhattan hotel. And what name turns up there? Koutoulakis.

This is all public money. It's not a travel slush fund for you and your friends. How do you justify these repeated junkets by you and your friends at public expense?

Hon Mr Stockwell: The Integrity Commissioner reviewed those expenses and he approved them all.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is to the Deputy Premier. All across the province of Ontario, you are hearing from drivers who are concerned about skyrocketing auto insurance premiums. Just today, a young man who requires a car to go to work wrote to me saying that private insurance companies in Ontario are telling him they need to charge \$7,000 a year to give him basic coverage on an eight-year-old vehicle. He says he doesn't understand how he's supposed to come up with that money when he barely makes that amount.

It's common knowledge that auto insurance premiums are exploding because of the dramatic decline in income that insurance companies have experienced because of their losses on the stock market. Deputy Premier, do you think it's all right that this young man and millions of other Ontarians like him are paying through the nose because insurance companies lost money on the stock market?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I will refer that to the Minister of Finance.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): I certainly share the honourable member's concern for this particular auto insurance consumer. Obviously, I'm not privy to the personal circumstances of this consumer, so I can't comment on what may or may not have occurred in this circumstance.

I know the honourable member's government was certainly concerned about this. They had proposed public auto insurance; they did not do that. What we're looking at—and we've been working with stakeholders—is to put in place some plans and some regulation changes that will help the companies and consumers to make sure we have auto insurance in this province.

Mr Hampton: It turns out that this young man is a recent arrival from Montreal. Before he left Montreal, he received a quote of \$2,500 from the public auto insurance company in Quebec—so \$7,000 in Ontario and \$2,500 in Quebec.

Minister, you will know that while insurance rates in Ontario have risen almost 40% since 2001, they've risen by less than 10% in provinces like British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, which have public auto insurance systems.

The changes you're proposing are not going to make up for the amount of money that private insurance companies lost on the stock market. They're still going to insist that that money come from drivers across Ontario.

I think we need a public insurance system in Ontario. Are you prepared to bring one in?

Hon Mrs Ecker: First of all, the problem we're finding with auto insurance, not only in Canada but in many other countries around the world, is not because of the stock market. I think we need to be clear here. There are a number of issues that are pressuring auto insurance—the increased cost of repairs, for example. There are a number of pressures that are causing this problem. As I said, we are working with the stakeholders to put in place strategies which will help protect consumers; provide better rights for consumers to make sure there is better access to treatment for consumers; take administrative processes that may be adding to costs, may be running consumers through endless assessments and dispute mechanisms.

The honourable member says, "Bring in public auto insurance." Well, where was he? His government decided not to do it. I would assume they made that decision based on rational policy reasons. For example, one of the reasons those public systems are having lower rates is because they have lower benefits for consumers—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): My question is for the government House leader.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Stop the clock for a quick moment, please. Here he comes.

The member for St Paul's.

Mr Bryant: My question is to the government House leader. You said last Tuesday, when asked in a media scrum, that you would release a copy of the letter you wrote to the Integrity Commissioner. Do you deny that you said that?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): No.

Mr Bryant: Then why have you not released the letter for the last six days? Why do you continue to pretend that the Integrity Commissioner is looking into facts that speak to the various calls for your resignation that have been made by various sources, when in fact you know what the scope of the inquiry of the Integrity Commissioner is; it is contained in that letter, and you can clarify to everybody what the Integrity Commissioner is looking at by your release of that letter. You promised you would release it six days ago. I understand that the Stockwellian approach to this involves the release of contradictory facts in a selective fashion. But you're on camera and you're on tape saying that you'd release this letter. Why on earth will you not release it?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I'm sure all the relevant information will be released when the Integrity Commissioner finishes his investigation.

IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE POLICY

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship. There have been a lot of media reports about problems with the federal refugee claimant system. For example, the recent federal auditor's report states that Citizenship and Immigration Canada has lost track of 36,000 failed refugee claimants illegally in Canada. Federal mismanagement of the refugee claimant system not only costs provincial taxpayers money; it also poses a real security risk. What is our government's position with regard to the refugee claimant system?

1410

Hon Carl DeFaria (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors): I thank my hard-working colleague for this question. It's a real shame that the federal government has lost track of 36,000 failed refugee claimants in the process. We have publicly called on the federal government to reduce the time it takes to make decisions about refugee claims. We want the federal Liberal government to remove those individuals whose claims have been rejected or withdrawn. We have also called on the federal government to assume all provincial costs that provide services to refugee claimants. It costs the province millions of dollars to support refugee claimants. The province has been funding refugee claimants for legal aid and housing. We say, "No more." The refugee claimant system is a federal responsibility. The federal government should pay for all the costs.

Mr Gill: I'd like to thank the minister for that answer. This mismanagement is appalling. Clearly, the federal government has not managed the immigration system effectively or safely. Please inform this House of the other costs that Ontarians incur due to the federal mismanagement of the immigration program.

Hon Mr DeFaria: Another area of concern for our government is the lack of federal enforcement of family sponsorship agreements. When an Ontario resident sponsors a family member, he or she agrees to pay to take care of the sponsored relative's financial needs. How-

ever, some sponsors do not live up to their obligations. As a result, there are thousands of sponsored immigrants in Ontario who have turned to provincial social assistance. This is a burden to Ontario taxpayers. The combined provincial and municipal cost for social assistance for refugee claimants and failed family sponsorship is about \$200 million a year. Again we say that this is unacceptable, and we'll put a stop to it. The federal government must live up to its obligations.

MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): My question is to the government House leader. Your propensity to eat, drink, work and play at taxpayers' expenses is now common knowledge. What isn't known yet is the total cost of your ways. We know about the \$3,000 in late-night pub crawls and the \$60,000 European tour, but I want to give you a chance to come clean on yet another one of these excursions. Would you stand before this House and tell us, just how much did you, your family and your staff bill the Toronto Olympic bid for your travels over the last few years?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I don't have any knowledge of what you're speaking of. If you could expand on that, it would be wonderful.

Mr Smitherman: Information has become known to us that in the course of Toronto's bid for the Olympic Games, in your capacity as an Ontario minister you attended several very hot world spots, maybe Sydney, perhaps even Moscow. The fact of another level of government, or in this case an agency, receiving government funding doesn't excuse you from being accountable for those dollars. Given your track record, we think that the public has a right to know.

I'd like to ask you to put on the public record how much you billed the Toronto Olympic bid for staff, personal and family travel that you made to those hot spots. We understand that your in-laws might have been along for at least one of those trips. Can you please tell us if they picked up their own expenses.

Hon Mr Stockwell: That's ridiculous. That's an absolutely ridiculous question. Furthermore, I was there with a number of politicians, federally, provincially and municipally. We were all operating under the same terms and conditions of the Toronto Olympic bid. There was no difference for me as to any other elected official that went.

TOURISM

Mr AL McDonald (Nipissing): My question today is for the Minister of Tourism and Recreation, the Honourable Brian Coburn, MPP for Ottawa-Orléans. You're well aware that convention business in Toronto and around the province has taken quite a hit because of our health challenges. I understand that you were at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre this morning to make

an important announcement. Could you please tell us more about this announcement and how it will strengthen our struggling convention business?

Hon Brian Coburn (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): I thank the member from Nipissing. He's absolutely right. I had the pleasure this morning of announcing a \$5-million convention development fund, which is over two years. That is to go toward the convention facilities that we have across Ontario so they can secure and recapture some of the business that we have lost over the last short while, and market and develop plans to grow that business as we go forward into the future.

The primary goal of the fund is to strengthen Ontario's position as a premier destination for major conventions here in Toronto and in Ontario. This will help us maintain jobs in the tourism business, encourage partnerships and private sector initiatives and investment in tourism development.

This is part of the program that the Premier announced a couple of months ago, \$128 million toward tourism recovery in the province. This is one part of that program, along with the other one that we made, from May 1 to the end of September, in terms of no taxes on accommodation and an admissions tax holiday to help the tourism industry.

Mr McDonald: Thank you, Minister Coburn, for your response. This announcement was great news for Toronto and many other cities around the province.

I've read recently and heard from many people who believe that the summer tourism season is over in Ontario. Communities throughout the province are seeing the number of visitors decline, and many doubt that the tourism will be able to recover this summer. As you know, Ontario is a first-class tourism destination. However, it seems that in the eyes of the world we're losing that edge this summer. Minister, could you tell me your thoughts about this tourism season and your response to those who believe that the summer tourism season is over?

Hon Mr Coburn: As far as I'm concerned, the tourism season is far from over for this summer. The Premier has stated quite clearly that we'll do whatever it takes for our province to recover from the unprecedented challenge that we're facing here in Ontario.

Our government has developed, as part of the \$128-million program, a program to rebuild global confidence here in Ontario. We've invested in major events and promotions to attract more visitors to stay in our hotels, eat in our fine restaurants and go to the major festivals that we have around the province.

We're developing marketing campaigns to showcase Ontario to the world. We have devoted funds to tourism partnerships to promote Toronto and the rest of Ontario. We're pleased to partner with Mirvish Productions, for example, and the initiative they've taken. We've had an outstanding response from that initiative and other initiatives that we've had here in Ontario. The most recent one, of course, is the Toronto concert. We've sold out the tickets to that and we look forward—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question for the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services. The following notice was posted on the Halton autism society Web site: "Johnny's 1st Annual Fund-raiser Garage Sale and Car Wash, Saturday Morning, June 21, 2003," in Burlington.

"Johnny has autism. All fundraising is for Johnny's IBI medically necessary treatment. On May 18, 2003, Johnny had his sixth birthday. As a birthday present, the Ontario government cut funding for his treatment, as they are doing with all children with autism when they turn six. Treatment costs up to \$55,000 a year. We don't have it."

Minister, why are you forcing Ontario families to these lengths just to get medically necessary treatment for their autistic children?

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services): My colleague from across the way in the third party has asked me in this House before about autism. I have indicated to her and I indicate again that this government is very concerned about the children who are diagnosed with autism. We are a government that is so concerned that we have undertaken one of the most comprehensive programs in North America.

In Ontario before 1999, there was no program—not one cent spent by either the Liberal or the NDP government before it on autism. Our government recognized that this was a serious disorder that was of great concern to the children and their families. We have acted and began, from 1999, with a modest amount of \$5 million put to this program, to now an expansive program that is going to, when it's finally rolled out, be a \$100-million investment in children with autism.

1420

Ms Martel: Minister, Johnny's family is in the gallery today—his mom, dad and grandfather—and like me, they don't believe that garage sales should be used to fund IBI treatment. The government should fund IBI treatment. But they don't know what else to do. IBI treatment is medically necessary and should be funded through OHIP. We don't ask families to fundraise for cancer treatment, and we should not be demanding that they fundraise for IBI treatment for their autistic children.

Minister, tell this family today to cancel the garage sale and cancel the car wash. Tell them you're going to do the right thing and cover IBI treatment through OHIP for every autistic child who needs it.

Hon Mrs Elliott: As I indicated, we have an expansive program in autism. It began from nothing in 1999 to become one of the most comprehensive in the country. We are also one of the only governments that invests heavily in intensive behavioral intervention programs. Why? Because research tells us that is a very key

time to help those children, and that's exactly what we're trying to do.

We know we need to do more, and that is why this government is not only investing intensively in IBI, the early intervention program, but is also in the process of working with the Ministry of Education on their special education autism standards and designing for the first time an out-of-class, out-of-school program to help children with autism receive the help they need, because we know it matters to help them get the best start.

MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Business Services. You oversee the Liquor Control Board of Ontario, the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, the Ontario Film Review Board and the Ontario Racing Commission, among other responsibilities. Can you tell us if you have ever charged expenses through any of these organizations or through your riding association, for example? If so, for what and how much in total have they paid on your behalf?

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): The member has asked a question about information I don't particularly have at hand. But I think the member knows the system we have put in place, where any expenses incurred in ministers' offices are referred to the Integrity Commissioner, who of course is the second-highest jurist in the province of Ontario, to be reviewed to make sure they fit with integrity principles.

Mr Crozier: Minister, quite frankly, that was not the answer I expected. I didn't know that you refer those kinds of expenses to the Integrity Commissioner as a routine. That's news.

The Minister of the Environment has said to us repeatedly that everybody does these kinds of things. Quite frankly, that reflects on each of us in this place, and that's why I wanted to ask you today, because you have a number of boards and commissions under your jurisdiction.

So you're telling me that as a routine—this isn't something that, for example, is a directive from the minister's office or Management Board—if you're going to travel, you first refer this to the Integrity Commissioner. Is that what you're saying everybody does over there?

Hon Mr Hudak: I think the member misconstrues my response. I think the member well knows that for any expenses that are incurred to my ministry budget as a minister of the Crown, under our legislation our procedure is to refer those to the Integrity Commissioner to make sure they fit in with strong integrity principles on an annual basis. In fact, the most recent report came out a few weeks ago. It basically raised no red flags whatsoever. All members of this cabinet were consistent with those integrity principles.

I must say that one thing that did come up a few weeks or months ago was the member's leader, who I think spent some \$17,000 of taxpayers' money to go to image

consultants in Chicago and Washington. The top mud throwers of the Democratic Party were giving advice to the Leader of the Opposition. I don't know if it was for what shoulder pads to wear, how to cut his hair, or how to come across in front of the public. He certainly needed the help. But \$17,000 of taxpayers' money was charged for political purposes. I want to know when Dalton McGuinty and Bruce Crozier are going to pay back that money to the taxpayers of Ontario.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): Unlike my Liberal colleagues across the floor, I'm interested in policies and issues that impact the people of Ontario.

My question is for the Minister of Labour. As a former parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour—in fact, the parliamentary assistant who led a province-wide consultation with labour and employers on health and safety issues, as well as on WSIB reform—I know that our government is committed to ensuring that employers observe their responsibilities when it comes to workers' health and safety. But I know that some employers have been more successful than others in doing so. I understand that you visited an employer recently who is doing extremely well in this regard. Could you please inform the House about this visit and this organization?

Hon Brad Clark (Minister of Labour): I thank the honourable member for the question. As members of this House are aware, the government is extremely concerned about health and safety, and we've made partners with numerous organizations across this province.

Since 1995, more than one million new jobs have been created in Ontario, and during that period of time, the lost-time injury rate in the province of Ontario has dropped by 30%, which is, in itself, a remarkable achievement. But there are many organizations and many companies that have gone one step further.

Last Monday, I visited Ontario Power Generation's Sir Adam Beck generating station in Niagara Falls. The facility has 240 employees. They have gone 1,045 days without a single lost-time injury, which is an incredible accomplishment. They believe in zero injuries on the job. They're making it happen.

I commend Ontario Power Generation, the workers at the plant, the Canadian Union of Public Employees and the Society of Energy Professionals for their commitment to health and safety in the plant.

Mr Maves: Thank you for that answer and for your visit to Niagara Falls to the Sir Adam Beck generating station.

We also were happy to announce this past week that Ontario Power Generation is expanding and bringing in 80 employees, engineers and financial staff to Niagara as they redeveloped and really rescued an old Adam Beck building. Now 80 new employees will work out of the Niagara Falls office.

We're proud of the progressive employee-employer relationship that the Power Workers' Union has with OPG in Niagara Falls.

Can you tell me how Ontario Power Generation managed this extraordinary achievement, so that other employers might take heed of their model for workplace health and safety?

Hon Mr Clark: What I have found through my experience as Minister of Labour is that there are companies that have achieved exceptional health and safety records and have consistent approaches to workplace safety. Successful companies have a system of checks and balances. For example, at OPG, attention is to detail. Every employee at OPG has a safety checklist that they have to complete before each and every task. The checklist is particular to the task at hand. What is crucial is not only working through the safety stipulations for that task, but also filling out the list. It makes the employee stop and think about safety. It puts the employee into the safety mindset.

Every day starts with a tailboard meeting. During that meeting, the work group reviews the jobs for the day and the safety procedures that are required and are to be followed.

Successful companies right across this province are doing these types of things. They have joint health and safety committees. They work with the employer. They've changed their cultural attitudes to ensure that workplace injuries become nonexistent in the province of Ontario.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. The forest products industry in this province is in a state of crisis. Thousands of people are being laid off all across the north, with further job losses and mill shutdowns announced on an almost daily basis.

This past Friday, I attended an emergency meeting in Nipigon, attended by all stakeholders, which focused on finding both short- and long-term solutions to this very grim situation.

One of the central points made at this gathering was that the province of Ontario does not seem to remotely acknowledge the gravity of the situation, which is extraordinary, considering the fact that the forest products industry is the second-largest in the province, next to the auto sector. This is not simply about federal issues, so I hope you won't use that as an excuse for your lack of involvement.

My question is this: Minister, do you understand just how serious the situation is, and are you and the Premier prepared to get directly involved to help out the industry during this very perilous time?

1430

Hon Jerry J. Ouellette (Minister of Natural Resources): Absolutely. We actually know how serious this issue is. While the member was in Nipigon at the meeting—I had staff in attendance there—I was in Ottawa dealing with Alberta, Quebec, British Columbia and the feds on forestry issues. We know there are a lot

of factors that are in play here, including the value of the Canadian dollar, which has a substantial impact, the weak market and of course softwood lumber.

We are doing everything we can to make sure that those flows that are affected by the softwood lumber players, to the pulp and paper mills, for example, are continuing to go to keep those workers going and to keep as many people going in northern Ontario as possible during these tough times.

Mr Gravelle: Minister, we need a lot more than that from you. We need more than words; we need some real action related to provincial issues that you can deal with. The fact is that from Thunder Bay to Marathon and White River, from Atikokan and Dubreuilville to Cochrane and Kirkland Lake, communities and people are fighting for their very survival. The issues you could help us with range from wood supply concerns to exploding energy costs to rising insurance rates. But most of all, northerners are expecting to see you and your government on the ground helping us find solutions. These layoffs hit our sawmills first, and they hit them hard. Now the pulp and paper mills like Bowater are announcing massive layoffs as part of the fallout of the lack of fibre and wood chips.

It is my understanding that the Premier will be spending some time in the north later this week. Would that not be a good time to sit down with municipal leaders and industry representatives to offer them direct help? Minister, can you guarantee us today that you and your colleague, northern development minister Wilson, will not only treat this as a top priority for your two ministries but you will see that the Premier deals directly with this issue when he's in the north later this week?

Hon Mr Ouellette: The Premier is well aware of everything. We, for example, within the past week met with Tannis from the Northwest Association of Chambers of Commerce. We met with the mayor of Atikokan to discuss these issues. As well, we've been able to work and assist in a lot of areas such as a salvageable wood program so that blow-down or firewood that's taken where a fire has gone through—we've sped up the process to make sure that that fibre is available.

Not only that, we work with a number of other areas that the forest industry has some concerns with that deal with the guidelines. There's no foxing around in these issues at all. Quite frankly, we're dealing with those issues and we're making sure that the industry is dealt with on a regular basis because we know how important the fibre industry is to the province of Ontario.

IMMIGRATION POLICY

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship. The federal Minister of Immigration, Mr Denis Coderre, is on record as saying that Ontario has not been "engaged" on immigration issues. He has also indicated that Ontario has shown little interest in the selection of economic immigrants. Immigration is important to this province; indeed, it's

vital to its future. Ontario deserves a hand in shaping the policies that bring newcomers here.

Minister, I wonder if you could clarify: what is Ontario's immigration position when it comes to the selection of immigrants?

Hon Carl DeFaria (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors): I wish to thank my colleague, the hard-working member from Scarborough East. Immigration issues have always been a priority for our government. In fact, over the past year I personally met and spoke with Minister Coderre on a number of occasions. I clearly expressed Ontario's concern about the inefficiency of the overseas selection process for economic immigrants. The federal system is just too slow; it's just too inefficient for Ontario's dynamic economy. The average waiting time for an applicant is two years. A faster, improved overseas selection process is imperative. We need to ensure that Ontario's employers receive the kind of skilled immigrants they need—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Sorry to interrupt the minister. You have about 10 seconds. The member for Windsor West, please come to order. The member had about 10 seconds to wrap up. Sorry for the interruption.

Hon Mr DeFaria: The new federal point system for economic immigrants is a barrier to many tradespeople. To remain competitive in attracting skilled workers and business immigrants—

The Speaker: The minister's time is up. Supplementary?

Mr Gilchrist: I thank the minister for his response. All I can say is, having heard the heckling from the folks on the other side, the member for St Catharines and others seem to have forgotten that they voted in favour of the resolution when Mr Tascona brought forth, a resolution that spoke specifically to Ontario standing up and being able to have its own views and take a stand on making sure we get great immigrants coming to Ontario.

Mr Minister, thank you for your response, but what other things has Ontario done and committed to with regard to attracting skilled immigrants to our great province?

Interjections.

Hon Mr DeFaria: I again thank my colleague for the question. Obviously the opposite side realize the impact our government has in the diverse communities of Ontario and the support I have from the immigrant communities.

Our government supports a number of initiatives to help newcomers succeed in the labour market. Our government provides bridge training programs, an academic credential assessment service and partnership with occupational regulatory bodies. The federal government has talked a lot about helping skilled immigrants enter the market, but they have done nothing at all to accomplish that. The province needs skilled immigrants. We know that and we are doing whatever is necessary to accom-

plish that. We need a federal financial commitment to get skilled immigrants here, to help them with training and entering the job market.

The Speaker: The minister's time is up. New question.

SCHOOL SAFETY

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): My question is to the Minister of Education. Minister, Toronto parents want your promise that no more staff will be cut from the Toronto schools. Jordan Berger, the NDP candidate in Davenport, marched with his community to "Take back the day" after some terrifying incidents involving children. Many parents asked him to bring this message back to you: there has never been a worse time to cut caretakers, vice-principals and education assistants. These people are the eyes and ears in our schools. They keep our children safe.

Will you promise that your board supervisor will listen to frightened parents and that no more staff will be cut from the Toronto board?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I thank the member for his question. As the member knows, our government has been very concerned about the safety of our children in our schools. That's why, in 2000, my colleague introduced the Safe Schools Act. Despite what the member is saying today, both the NDP and the Liberals did not support, and voted against, that Safe Schools Act, which was introduced to help our children.

Mr Marchese: The Safe Schools Act does not protect children. The question I asked you and that Jordan Berger wanted to ask you is, we need caretakers, vice-principals and education assistants in our schools. Why? Because they are the eyes and ears of school safety. Dr Rozanski has shown you how you can do this. All you need is the will and the desire to do so. You can fire your supervisor and we can have our vice-principals, our caretakers and our education assistants. The people of Davenport are doing their part to keep the kids safe. They want assurances from you that you will do the same.

So the question is, will you listen to these parents who fear their children will be less safe if they have fewer staff such as caretakers and education assistants and vice-principals in the schools, and will you simply promise that no more staff will be cut from our Toronto schools?

Hon Mrs Witmer: It still perplexes me that the member over there can stand in his place despite the fact that he and his party voted against the Safe Schools Act in 2000. That was exactly the reason we introduced it: in order to ensure the safety of our children within the schools. As the member knows, it had a tremendous impact on making sure that persons could not be on school premises without being authorized to do so. In fact, if a person was convicted, there was a fine. We set up this provincial model for a local police-school board protocol in order to ensure there were protocols which protected our children within the school community.

We have developed the procedures and we will continue to do what is needed to ensure our children are safe within the school community.

1440

MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I want to return to the Minister of Consumer and Business Services. Minister, I understood your answer. I understand that ministry expenses are reviewed by the Integrity Commissioner, but that's not what I asked.

I asked this, and it's very simple: have you or your staff ever charged expenses through the LCBO, the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, the Ontario Film Review Board or the Ontario Racing Commission? If so, for what and how much in total have they paid on your behalf?

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): I appreciate the question. I guess that's the tone they struck across the floor, unfortunately. I guess that comes from Dalton McGuinty's high-priced advisers over there in Chicago and Washington, DC—\$17,000 to give that kind of advice.

If the member has a particular question, I'd invite him to ask me or talk to me about it, if there's a particular concern he has. My understanding of the agencies he mentioned—not in my recollection. But the best way to deal with this, as the member has, if there's a concern about an expense, is through the Integrity Commissioner, as I've said, and the member he referenced has said in his answers in the House.

Mr Crozier: But, Minister, you said, "not in my recollection." I would have thought that you would know this. What still bothers me—all I need is a definite yes or no—is that these boards and agencies aren't reviewed by the Integrity Commissioner.

Interjections.

Mr Crozier: Well, the Minister of the Environment said that everybody does these things. I'm simply, on my side, trying to ask if any of these organizations, a minister who has a great deal to do with a number of organizations—I'm simply asking, yes or no?

Hon Mr Hudak: Again, if the member has some information he is aware of, let me know, and I'll look into it on behalf of my ministry and staff. My understanding is that it's not the case; we have not done that. But if there is a concern that a minister of the crown has with respect to expenses and an arm's-length agency, I think the best way to deal with it is through the Integrity Commissioner to make sure it passes muster with respect to integrity.

I would respect the member's question a lot more if he had a particular concern—he's down in the mud here—to bring forward to me. I would have a lot more respect for the individual member, before he started throwing accusations across the floor, if he would deal with one thing that is clear and evident: the \$17,000 that his leader, Dalton McGuinty, has expensed to the taxpayers

of Ontario to help pay for political image consultants from the Democratic Party in the United States. I would like to have a value-for-money audit on what exactly he's getting for that \$17,000. I would respect that question a lot more if first he went after the \$17,000 that is clearly on the record on the backs of taxpayers of the province of Ontario.

KIDS' FISHING DAY

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is less exciting, but it is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, many Ontarians, including members of my family, have frequently taken time to experience the great features that nature has to offer in the great province of Ontario. One of these activities, of course, is fishing.

I was very pleased to be part of the third annual Kids' Fishing Day on May 31, 2003. Once again, there was a tremendous turnout and a wonderful opportunity for everyone involved. Could you please explain to members of the House what Kids' Fishing Day is and how it benefits Ontario?

Hon Jerry J. Ouellette (Minister of Natural Resources): We appreciate the hard work from the member from Durham in bringing people out. This was an opportunity for those that may not be as fortunate to experience fishing and get out and participate. On this day we had over 1,000 people show up. We had a number of other activities on: Ducks Unlimited had a marsh display to show the great work of the marshes; we had a dog demonstration to show active working dogs; we had fly-tying demonstrations; we had natural heritage, along with nature hikes and a lot of other activities.

It wasn't just that weekend. Prior to that, the first weekend in May, in the Minister of Finance's riding in Uxbridge, we had over 2,100 people show up for the same opportunity. We had participation from the Legion, the Optimist Club, the Masons. As a matter of fact, Canadian Tire even participated in sponsoring the great event. That's over 3,000 people in that short period of time. This is an excellent opportunity for thousands and thousands of recreational hours of fishing in the province of Ontario.

Mr O'Toole: Minister, I personally want to be on record as thanking you, because it's the enthusiasm for this activity that has made this project so successful, and not just in my riding. Certainly when I looked at the faces of the over 500 children that day, many from my riding, the gratitude and the expressions on their faces are a memory you should certainly be proud of. You've left that legacy and arguably given them a greater appreciation for our natural resources in this wonderful province.

I know this is but one of the programs. For those members of this House interested in listening to the ideas you have, what other programs are you undertaking, besides an awareness of fishing? Perhaps you could share those with members of the House.

Hon Mr Ouellette: Actually, there have been a large number of opportunities. The member from Peterborough

had Ducks Unlimited sponsor, with Dan McWilliams, over 5,000 kids participating in an activity up in Peterborough in his riding.

We have Fish'n Canada, with a travelling fish pond going around to various businesses and putting it up to give new opportunities for people who haven't had the chance in the past.

We have classroom hatchery programs, where kids actually participate, right from streams to watching the eggs hatch in aquariums in classrooms, swim up and then get released back into the environment.

We have Healthy Waters, where we're trying to return many streams to cold or cool-water status by planting trees and stopping bank erosion and things like that.

Through the Living Legacy program, we're creating thousands of recreational opportunities. For those who don't know it, on an annual basis with our partners, we release over 10 million fish into the province. That's great news.

With all these opportunities, by the end of next month I expect that tens of thousands of individuals who never had the opportunity to fish before will have that opportunity in Ontario.

MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): This question is for the government House leader.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Stop the clock for a moment; actually, I wanted to consult about something anyway.

We can start the clock. The member for St Paul's.

Mr Bryant: We have a question about your communication with the Integrity Commissioner. Last week, you said you would make that available to the public. You've now changed your story. This is not the first time. You changed your story as to who paid for what for this particular trip, you changed your story as to what was said to a reporter in the *Globe and Mail* and now you've changed your story as to whether you're going to make information available to the public. Now you won't even answer the questions.

This stock Stockwellian response of taking the Fifth is a true affront to this Legislature. Why will you not answer questions on this issue when you know very well that your credibility and accountability are on the line? Why will you not release this letter that you said you would release last week?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I think it's better to give it to the Integrity Commissioner so he can do a full review and determine exactly what will and will not be released.

Mr Bryant: I think it would be better if you did what you said you would do and released the letter to the public. I think it would be better if all members of this House were able to know that when they ask you a question, they're going to get a straight answer, not a selective answer, not a selective accounting of the facts

containing some truth but leaving a little bit out. We need to know the truth here.

You've been spending taxpayers' money, OPG money, the public's money, and the public have a right to know how you spent the people's money. Why will you not release the letter that will make very clear that the inquiry by the Integrity Commissioner is on an extremely narrow question and your credibility and accountability are another matter that must be answered in this House?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I think those are the very questions the Integrity Commissioner will be reporting on.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): My question is for the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services. I listened rather intently to the question that was asked by the member for Nickel Belt. It pertained to particular services for autistic children over the age of six. I understand there are children under the age of six who still do not have service, and I know that significant funds are being channelled into new programs. But I'm wondering why not every child from one to six with autism is getting care.

1450

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services): I thank my colleague for the thoughtful question. We have had a number of questions here in the House about autism, and all of them have centred around the fact that our government has been working very hard to find ways to meet the need. My colleague has asked about children who are under the age of six.

We started this program, based on the best research advice, to give the attention to children between the ages of one and six. We were told that that's where dollars invested and intensive behaviour intervention would be most effective. We are continually trying to do that. We now have \$33 million devoted to delivering programs for those very young children. The challenge we are having across this nation, as more and more children are being diagnosed with autism, is that we are having a tremendous amount of difficulty in finding qualified individuals to provide the service. I want to assure my colleague that we are going to colleges, we are going to conventions and we are developing marketing activities—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

Ms Mushinski: It's interesting that that didn't come out in the questioning earlier. Given that we know there's a great deal of emphasis on early identification for children with autism, it would be interesting if you would tell this House how the programs funded by your ministry compare with other jurisdictions. In other words, what are other jurisdictions doing compared to what your ministry is doing with respect to children under the age of six?

Hon Mrs Elliott: Again, we are having a terrible time in Ontario in trying to find enough qualified trainers. As this disorder is being diagnosed in children, we're needing more and more trainers. It's a very intensive, challenging program. We are going to colleges and we are working with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to try to find ways to bring these people to Ontario to help our children between the ages of zero and six.

Across the country, our province is definitely a leader. For instance, in British Columbia, about \$3.42 million is allotted to IBI programs; in Alberta, about \$6 million; it's just starting in Newfoundland and New Brunswick; in Saskatchewan, \$25,000 per child—

The Speaker: I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): My question is for the Deputy Premier. Yesterday, the leader of the federal New Democratic Party, Jack Layton—

Interjections.

Ms Churley: —and I held a press conference with representatives from the hotel and restaurant employees' union to call once again for your government and the federal Liberal government to act now to help laid-off workers. They've had a plan we've told you about several times now that would involve your government's topping up EI payments during the times they are laid off or their hours are cut back while they're upgrading their skills. Minister, I'm asking you again: will you commit to this plan?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): The Minister of Municipal Affairs will respond.

Hon David Young (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): We're prepared to commit to continue to fight for and support the people of this province. I suspect that the member opposite is aware of the fact that we did come forward last Friday to announce a compensation program for those ordinary Ontarians who committed extraordinary acts to protect their neighbours. We came forward to protect and support those people. There are additional challenges. The member for Windsor, across the way, quite rightly says that the federal government is missing in action in many respects. I'm hopeful that will change. I'm hopeful that before the end of this week we will see action, not words, in the way of dollars emanating from Ottawa. I compliment the member opposite and the leader of the federal NDP for taking a stand this past weekend.

Ms Churley: I noticed when I got up and mentioned Jack Layton, the leader of the NDP, that all the provincial Liberals yelled and heckled. That's because their federal cousins in Ottawa are on an early holiday and not doing a darn thing about this. They just took off to play golf.

Very seriously here, there are 12,000 hospitality workers laid off and 10,000 more on part-time. Minister, you're still here, at least. We're in this House. We have

been calling on you and federal government since March to work with the federal government to bring in this program. Their rent has not been paid. They're facing eviction notices. Gas and hydro have been cut off. These are some of the most vulnerable, lowest-paid workers in Toronto and across this province. They need your help. Will you commit to topping up EI so they can get the full salary during this terrible time for them?

Hon Mr Young: As the member opposite indicates, we haven't seen a lot of action, and more particularly, we haven't seen a lot of words emanating from Ottawa. I am going to be meeting with the defence minister this Thursday. You asked whether or not I would work with the federal government. The answer is yes. We are prepared to work with the federal government. Quite frankly, we've been trying to work with the federal government for an extended period of time. I wrote to the federal defence minister on April 11, I wrote again on May 23, and I wrote again last week. On each occasion, I indicated that we, the Ernie Eves government, would continue to work for the people of this province.

I would point out that our Premier, Premier Eves, came forward at a very early stage to support those in the hospitality industry. In excess of \$130 million was committed by the province of Ontario to support that industry. There is more to be done. I'm prepared to work with you. I'm prepared to work with our colleagues in Ottawa.

PETITIONS

EDUCATION

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition that reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Conservative government has spent over \$385 million to fire teachers and education workers in our public school system;

"Whereas there are 26% fewer teacher-librarians and 22% fewer physical education teachers in our schools today than there were in 1997;

"Whereas the Eves government diverted over \$100 million in federal transfers for early childhood development into tax cuts for corporations and slashed all new grants for child care spaces;

"Whereas there are almost 40,000 students with learning difficulties waiting to be assessed by a professional;

"Whereas a study by the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto says that 'teachers are demoralized, student achievement has stalled, and school and school districts report great difficulty in meeting local needs';

"We, the undersigned, call on the Eves"—Conservative—"government to return peace to our public school system and return \$1.6 billion in essential services that has been removed from the public education system and

used to pay for misguided corporate tax cuts and partisan government advertising campaigns.”

I affix my signature. I'm in complete agreement.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the citizens of Kent county and Chatham had no direct say in the creation of the municipality of Chatham-Kent in 1997; and

“Whereas the Ontario government, by regulation and legislation, forced the amalgamation in accordance with the Meyboom report against the will of the elected local and county officials; and

“Whereas the municipality has not delivered the promised streamlined, more efficient and accountable local government, nor the provision of improved services at reduced costs;

“Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, demand that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Immediately rescind the forced amalgamation order and return our local municipal government to the citizens in a two-tier model of government to be approved by referendum by the electorate in the 2003 municipal election.”

This petition is signed by literally hundreds and hundreds of persons from across the municipality of Chatham-Kent.

1500

HIGHWAY 69

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Another tragedy on Highway 69 last week, so it is with sadness that I read the following petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas modern highways are economic lifelines for the north; and

“Whereas the stretch of Highway 69 from Sudbury south to Parry Sound is a treacherous road with a trail of death and destruction; and

“Whereas the carnage on Highway 69 has been staggering; and

“Whereas the Harris-Eves government has shown gross irresponsibility in not four-laning the stretch of Highway 69 between Sudbury and Parry Sound; and

“Whereas immediate action is needed to prevent more needless loss of life; and

“Whereas it is the responsibility of a government to provide safe roads for its citizens, and the Eves government has failed to do so;

“Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to urge the Eves government to begin construction immediately and four-lane Highway 69 between Sudbury and Parry Sound so that the carnage on Death Road North will cease.”

Of course, I affix my signature again to this petition.

HYDRO RATES

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have quite a number of petitions.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“The Harris-Eves government has mismanaged the electricity policy of the province of Ontario;

“Mike Brown, MPP, has been fighting for rural rate assistance;

“The Ernie Eves government forces Great Lakes Power customers to pay into a fund for rural rate assistance, and rural rate assistance would reduce the distribution bills for customers by hundreds of dollars each year;

“Therefore I support the efforts of Mike Brown, MPP, to have rural rate assistance extended to the Great Lakes Power service area immediately.”

This is signed by many of my constituents, these particular ones from Richards Landing and mostly from St Joseph Island.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas some motorists are recklessly endangering the lives of children by not obeying the highway traffic law requiring them to stop for school buses with their warning lights activated;

“Whereas the current law has no teeth to protect the children who ride the school buses of Ontario, and who are at risk and their safety is in jeopardy;

“Whereas the current school bus law is difficult to enforce, since not only is the licence plate number required but positive identification of the driver and vehicle as well, which makes it extremely difficult to obtain a conviction;

“Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the measures contained in private member's Bill 112, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to protect children while on school buses, presented by Pat Hoy, MPP, Chatham-Kent Essex, be immediately enacted. Bill 112 received the unanimous all-party support of the Ontario Legislature at second reading on June 13, 2002.

“Bill 112 imposed liability on the owner of a vehicle that fails to stop for a school bus that has its overhead red signal lights flashing and....

“We ask for the support of all members of the Legislature.”

HOME CARE

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition again concerns homemaking skills, which would be cut off in Sudbury by the CCAC due to a lack of funding:

“Whereas we are outraged by the community care access centre's decision to cut homemaking services to seniors;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) Provide enough resources to the Manitoulin-Sudbury Community Care Access Centre so that they can provide homemaking services; and

"(2) Instruct Associate Minister Dan Newman to attend a public meeting with MPP Rick Bartolucci "to hear stories about what will happen when homemaking services are cut off."

I affix my signature to this petition, as I did last week.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I have yet another petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas some motorists are recklessly endangering the lives of children by not obeying the highway traffic law requiring them to stop for school buses with their warning lights activated;

"Whereas the current law has no teeth to protect the children who ride the school buses of Ontario, and who are at risk and their safety is in jeopardy;

"Whereas the current school bus law is difficult to enforce, since not only is the licence plate number required but positive identification of the driver and vehicle as well, which makes it extremely difficult to obtain a conviction;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the measures contained in private member's Bill 112, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to protect children while on school buses, presented by Pat Hoy, MPP, Chatham-Kent Essex, be immediately enacted....

"Bill 112 imposed liability on the owner of a vehicle that fails to stop for a school bus that has its overhead red signal lights flashing and....

"We ask for the support of all members of the Legislature."

This petition is signed by persons from Acton and Rockwood, and I too have signed it.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Eves government has increased the fees paid for by seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities by 15% or \$7.02 per diem effective August 1, 2002; and

"Whereas this fee increase will cost seniors and our most vulnerable more than \$200 a month; and

"Whereas this increase is 11.1% above the rent increase guidelines for tenants in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the increase in the government's own contribution to raise the level of long-term-care services this year is less than \$2 per resident per day; and

"Whereas according to the government's own funded study, Ontario ranks last amongst comparable juris-

dictions in the amount of time provided to a resident for nursing and personal care; and

"Whereas the long-term-care funding partnership has been based on government accepting the responsibility to fund the care and services that residents need; and

"Whereas government needs to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$750 million over the next three years to raise the level of service for Ontario's long-term-care residents to those in Saskatchewan in 1999"—if you can believe it—"and

"Whereas this province has been built by seniors who should be able to live out their lives with dignity, respect and in comfort in this province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Demand that Premier Eves reduce his 15% fee increase on seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities and increase provincial government support for nursing and personal care to adequate levels."

Of course, I affix my signature and give it to Timothy, our page from Don Valley East, to bring to the table.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition that is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Eves government has increased the fees paid for by seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities by 15% or \$7.02 per diem effective August 1, 2002; and

"Whereas this fee increase will cost seniors and our most vulnerable more than \$200 a month; and

"Whereas this increase is 11.1% above the rent increase guidelines for tenants in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the increase in the government's own contribution to raise the level of long-term-care services this year is less than \$2 per resident per day; and

"Whereas according to the government's own funded study, Ontario ranks last amongst comparable jurisdictions in the amount of time provided to a resident for nursing and personal care; and

"Whereas the long-term-care funding partnership has been based on government accepting the responsibility to fund the care and services that residents need; and

"Whereas government needs to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$750 million over the next three years to raise the level of service for Ontario's long-term-care residents to those in Saskatchewan," back in 1999; and

"Whereas this province has been built by seniors who should be able to live out their lives with dignity, respect and in comfort in this province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Demand that Premier Eves reduce his 15% fee increase on seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities and increase provincial government support for nursing and personal care to adequate levels."

I affix my signature. I'm in complete agreement.

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): "Whereas the province of Ontario has delayed the second phase of the equity in education tax credits for parents who choose to send their children to independent schools; and

"Whereas prior to the introduction of this tax credit, Ontario parents whose children attended independent schools faced a financial burden of paying taxes to an education system they did not use, plus tuition for the school of their choice; and

"Whereas the equity in education tax credit supports parental choice in education and makes independent schools more accessible to all Ontario families;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully request that the government of Ontario reintroduce the second phase of the tax credit forthwith and continue—without delay—the previously announced timetable for the introduction of the tax credit over five years."

Since I am very much in agreement with this, I am pleased to sign it and clearly indicate to the Toronto Star that this is not a voucher and that's an outright lie.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): I would ask the member for Brampton Centre to withdraw that comment.

Mr Spina: I withdraw.

1510

HOME CARE

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas well-managed and adequately funded home health care is a growing need in our community; and

"Whereas the provincial government has frozen community care access centre budgets, which has meant dramatic cuts to service agency funding and services to vulnerable citizens, as well as shortened visits by front-line workers; and

"Whereas these dramatic cuts, combined with the increased complexity of care for those who do qualify for home care, has led to an impossible cost burden to home care agencies; and

"Whereas the wages and benefits received by home care workers employed by home care agencies are well below the wages and benefits of workers doing comparable jobs in institutional settings; and

"Whereas front-line staff are also required to subsidize the home care program in our community by being responsible for paying for their own gas and for vehicle maintenance; and

"Whereas other CCACs and CCAC-funded agencies across the province compensate their staff between 29 cents and 42.7 cents per kilometre; and

"Whereas CCAC-funded agency staff in our own community are paid 26 cents a kilometre, with driving time considered 'hours worked';

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To act now to increase funding to the CCAC of Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington in order for it to adequately fund service agencies so they can fairly compensate front-line workers."

I will affix my signature to this petition, because I am in full agreement.

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I'm very pleased to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. I have a number of petitions here.

"Whereas the province of Ontario has delayed the second phase of the equity in education tax credit for parents who choose to send their children to independent schools; and

"Whereas prior to the introduction of this tax credit, Ontario parents whose children attended independent schools faced a financial burden of paying taxes at home to an education system they did not use, plus tuition for the school of their choice; and

"Whereas the equity in education tax credit supports parental choice in education and makes independent schools more accessible to all Ontario families;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully request that the government of Ontario reintroduce the second phase of the tax credit forthwith and continue—without delay—the previously announced timetable for the introduction of the tax credit over five years."

I'm pleased to advise the House that this has in fact been changed and this petition has been addressed. I'm pleased to sign this petition.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): I just wanted to explain to the member for Brampton Centre, I may have been in a little bit of a rush to defend the institution that you were referring to, but I still think that it's maybe not parliamentary to use those words. It kind of leads us down a road that we don't want to go on. I may have been a little hasty, and if I was, I wanted to apologize to the member for Brampton Centre.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO ENERGY BOARD CONSUMER PROTECTION AND GOVERNANCE ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LA PROTECTION DES CONSOMMATEURS ET LA RÉGIE DE LA COMMISSION DE L'ÉNERGIE DE L'ONTARIO

Mr Baird moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 23, An Act to Amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 and the Municipal Franchises Act in respect to consumer protection, the governance of the Ontario Energy Board and other matters / Projet de loi 23, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario et la Loi sur les concessions municipales en ce qui a trait à la protection des consommateurs, à la régie de la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario et à d'autres questions.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs): I will indicate at the outset of my remarks that I'll be splitting my time with the hard-working member for Scarborough East, who not only acts as the parliamentary assistant at the Ministry of Energy but is also Ontario's first commissioner of alternative fuels, someone who is very highly regarded in the alternative energy sector in the province of Ontario for his outstanding work and leadership. He does a tremendous job.

I'm very pleased to have the chance to talk about Bill 23, which obviously seeks to overhaul and reform the Ontario Energy Board. The Premier ordered this review last fall. He ordered a quick review and gave us 100 days to listen to what stakeholders, citizens, unions and other market participants had to say. We did that and were able to report back to cabinet some 100 days later. We took the time to appropriately draft the legislation, table it in this House and enter into a debate.

The Ontario Energy Board's mandate has really grown so quickly, perhaps more quickly than the board could grow. This bill gives them the tools to more effectively address the challenges that they're now facing. They used to regulate the distribution of natural gas and provide advice with respect to electricity. Now they are a comprehensive regulator of all facets of the electricity industry, whether you're talking about transmission, distribution, retailing or even generation. They do a terrific amount of that.

The legislation that is in front of us today allows us the opportunity to really equip the board with additional powers to reform it and enable it to do its job better. I think if all members look at it, this is not a partisan bill. It's a bill that I hope all members will look at and give consideration to supporting in this place.

The legislation that we're presenting is the result of a lot of consultation, and I'd be remiss if I didn't talk about

that. We had the opportunity to get written submissions on this issue. We invited public comment, and I had the opportunity to sit down with well over 50 individuals at round tables to personally spend some time with them and hear what their concerns were.

We met with AMPCO, the Association of Major Power Consumers in Ontario. That's a group that provides us with a lot of good support and advice.

We also heard from the member opposite. She put a submission in, I understand.

We heard from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. Judith Andrew does a great job to forcefully bring the concerns and interests of small and medium-sized enterprises to decision-makers on all sides of the House at Queen's Park.

We heard from the Consumers' Association of Canada.

We heard from Energy Probe and my very good friend Tom Adams.

We heard from Enersource, the old Hydro Mississauga, which is a leader in conservation.

We heard from the Industrial Gas Users Association and the Independent Power Producers' Society of Ontario. John Brace works as the president of that organization.

We heard from Bernie Jones and others from the Ontario Energy Association.

We listened to people at the board—staff, employees and officials—themselves to find out what they would have to say. I had the opportunity to sit down with Floyd Laughren, now the former chair, to get his assessment. I said, "Give the government and the Legislature your best advice and counsel on this initiative." I asked him particularly, "Are there any anomalies, things that we can correct that would provide a smoother operation of the board?" He came forward with a number of ideas.

We met with Pollution Probe, an environmental group.

We met with Don McKinnon and Bob Menard of the Power Workers' Union. I should go out of my way to say that—the Minister of Labour is here—the Power Workers' Union does an outstanding job in representing the interests of their membership. I have an open-door policy, and it has meant an incredibly productive relationship, by and large, with those gentlemen. They're a union in the province of Ontario who want to embrace change, and have been perhaps one of the most successful unions in representing their membership to the government. I enjoy and value the relationship that we have with them.

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We heard from the Stakeholders' Alliance for Electricity Competition and Consumer Choice, headed up by David McFadden, a former member of this place, who provided us with some useful advice. They're a group that has come together representing various interests to give ideas, suggestions and support for reforms in the energy sector.

I could go on. We got submissions from some 78 groups in Ontario. We listened to that advice and were

able to come forward with a plan that I think, by and large, has gotten overwhelming support, if you talk to folks in the energy sector and energy consumer representatives. I think it's a good bill.

The legislation before us today, Bill 23, would make the Ontario Energy Board self-financing while maintaining its status as a crown agency. This is very similar to the reforms that were undertaken by the Ontario Securities Commission. The Ontario Securities Commission was reformed in the past number of years, and I think that has given it more teeth and the ability to do a better job of protecting the interests of consumers in the province.

It provides for terms for initial periods, and renewals to ensure that we can get qualified members. It establishes a management committee to deal with the day-to-day administrative duties of the board, thereby allowing the board members to focus their full attention on hearings. That's something which will be beneficial. It establishes an advisory committee of stakeholders, industry representatives and consumers to review annually the board's performance measures. This is so important. Too often we don't look at performance measures. We can bring that to the table, to invite stakeholders, participants themselves, consumers' groups, to give some input and advice on that.

We're establishing a regulatory calendar with a statement of priorities to increase accountability and ensure that stringent timelines are established. For example, we know we have to give a general rate order for natural gas, whether it's to Union Gas or Enbridge. We know we're going to have to do that this year and next year. We go through a huge amount of effort. It's important to set a timetable. The management committee could perhaps even look at two-year decisions. They deal with these things every year. There's a lot of stability in the gas market, as far as the regulatory regime side of it. In fact, if you look at it historically, over the last 10 or 15 years under governments of all three political parties, they have, more or less, got inflation. So that would be of assistance.

We'll allow board members to delegate some routine decision-making responsibilities to officials. This is done in just about every government ministry or agency. For example, the registrar general doesn't have to sign every birth certificate himself, or any amendment. The Attorney General doesn't have to process every single paper before a court. As long as there was the ability to appeal to a panel on the board, that might be able to provide some more advantageous performance for the board.

We're developing criteria for consumer protection support to ensure that consumers have input into the hearing process. That's something that's important, particularly where the mandate of the board is there to really reflect the marketplace that doesn't exist when you have a monopoly. That's important.

We want to look at ways to harmonize the powers of the Ontario Energy Board to eliminate duplication and streamline the regulation of natural gas and electricity.

These systems evolved separately, and too often there would be one rule for natural gas and another rule for electricity. The bill allows those to be harmonized.

This is something that I think is quite important: it enhances the board's mandate with respect to communications and involving the public. The board should have those powers and part of its fundamental mandate to get out there and explain its role to the public and consumers, so consumers would better understand what goes into a decision and what their role can be. So I think this is an important group of reforms that will allow the board to move forward in the future and do a great job.

We've learned in the past how important sound leadership is. Floyd Laughren served with great distinction, not just in this place but at the Ontario Energy Board. His predecessor, Marie Rounding, was appointed by the Liberals and then renewed by the New Democrats, if I'm not mistaken. I think she did an outstanding job. She's someone whom I had the opportunity to work with as a member of the Agency Reform Commission, a commission I worked on for the better part of a year, where we looked at what we could do to reform administrative justice and provide better results in terms of the work that our tribunals do. Of course, Hugh Macaulay was chair of the board for a number of years.

With Mr Laughren's decision to retire, I think it was tremendously important, with the importance that energy plays in our economy—it's particularly high on our economic and political agenda in the province. We needed someone of outstanding abilities to provide new leadership to the board, particularly in light of this reform and with the huge amount of consultations that we began right across the province of Ontario.

Everywhere we went, people said, "Look at the reforms that the Ontario Securities Commission made." It better protects investors, whether that be the widow with some mutual funds or stocks in her pension plan or whether it be other market participants. We looked at the huge changes that went on there.

One of the great things about having the opportunity to serve as the Minister of Energy is—as you'll know, the Ministry of Energy is a small ministry; the ministry's budget is approximately \$20 million—it allowed me the opportunity to have a chance to sit down and talk to a number of individuals whom I hadn't met before and say, "What qualities and capacities do you think should be prevalent in the next chair of the energy board?" I sat down and listened. My first conversation was with Floyd Laughren, and he was able to provide some first-hand experience. I spoke to a number of energy stakeholders here in the city of Toronto and in Ottawa and made a number of phone calls. I was able to identify an absolutely outstanding candidate, someone whom I hadn't had the occasion to personally work with, but someone about whom everyone I talked to and whom this gentleman had worked for had something good to say.

I approached the Honourable Howard Wetston. Mr Wetston is currently completing his five-year term as vice-chair of the Ontario Securities Commission. Howard

Wetston agreed to accept the challenge and the opportunity to become the chair. I think the people of the province of Ontario are tremendously fortunate that he has taken on this challenge.

Mr Wetston has five years under his belt, helping lead the reform at the Ontario Securities Commission. He has been able to see first-hand the administration and process side, but on the other side of the equation, he has heard cases and some pretty significant hearings with respect to issues that are before the commission.

Before taking that responsibility on, he was a Federal Court judge in Ottawa. Before that, he served as the director of the Competition Bureau for the federal public service in Ottawa. If you do a search of his time there, he was a real advocate for consumer protection, and he did a tremendous job in the federal sphere. He did serve as a deputy counsel to the National Energy Board in his early days of practising law.

I just think we are tremendously fortunate in the province of Ontario that this individual has agreed to be involved in public service.

Mr Wetston was called before the all-party committee of the Legislative Assembly. I'd like to quote what some of the members had to say about him. Michael Bryant, the member for St Paul's, said, "We believe that the Honourable Mr Wetston is in fact very qualified and is best prepared to take on this challenge."

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The member of this Legislature for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, Mr Conway, said, "I want to just briefly recommend to the committee the concurrence in support of this nominee, who obviously comes to this responsibility with a very, very powerful and, I think, impressive resumé. I was particularly struck by his testimony here today. It is, as my friend Bryant says, not going to be an easy job."

Mr Conway's words again: "I also want to say to Judge Wetston that I particularly like what he said about transparency, about consumer protection and about an honest and frank recognition of a very complex set of forces that are at play on an absolutely vital public interest, especially as it relates to electricity."

I'll go on. Mr Conway said, "It's hard for me to imagine a stronger candidate than Howard Wetston, because he brings the judicial, the consumer, the OSC—all of that is a tremendous recommendation for this job."

I was very proud that members on both the opposition and the government sides saw fit to vote concurrence on Mr Wetston. I think he's undoubtedly one of the most qualified candidates to ever come before that committee, certainly in my eight years. I should underline that Mr Wetston has no political background and is a public servant in the very best tradition.

We announced these reforms, and we did receive a good amount of stakeholder support. There are a number of members from Toronto in the House today. Courtney Pratt, of Toronto Hydro, wrote, "Congratulations on the appointment of the Honourable Howard Wetston as the new chair of the Ontario Energy Board. Mr Wetston's

diverse experience in business regulation and consumer advocacy, along with his service on the National Energy Board, will be invaluable....

"I would also like to congratulate you on your 10-point reform plan. These reforms are very progressive and they represent a positive step toward ensuring Ontario's regulatory regime provides a fair, efficient and predictable set of rules for all market participants."

That's from the head of the publicly owned Toronto Hydro.

The Electricity Distributors Association of Ontario—the EDA—put out a press release: "EDA Applauds Reforms to Ontario Energy Board." Many Electricity Distributors Association recommendations are adopted in the legislation we've presented here today.

"The Electricity Distributors Association (EDA) applauds today's announcement by energy minister John Baird in which he announced a series of reforms....

"Today's announcement directly responds to the key recommendations made in the EDA's submission to the government consultation process on the review of the Ontario board's mandate," said EDA CEO Charlie Macaluso.

"The provincial government's acceptance of the EDA's recommendations affirms the EDA's belief that by working together, the regulatory framework governing Ontario's electricity market can be dramatically improved to the benefit of consumers, shareholders and all market participants...."

Mr Macaluso goes on to say, "We are encouraged by the government's increasing willingness to work with and respond to the recommendations of Ontario's electricity distributors.... I would like to congratulate the Honourable Howard Wetston on his appointment as OEB chair. We welcome his appointment and will continue to work closely with government and the OEB in ensuring that Ontario has a strong and vibrant electricity industry."

The Ontario Energy Association wrote: "The members of the OEA were very pleased that you 'heard' and are implementing so many of the OEB reforms" that were recommended in their submission, and they "look forward to working with" the new chair.

I look forward to hearing the NDP critic for energy, probably close to the end of the day today, because we'll be using our leadoff time.

Enersource Corp, the local distribution company in Mississauga, put out a press release in support: "Enersource Corp expressed further optimism....

"The range of structural changes as announced today, steps to accelerate the regulatory decision making process and the appointment of a new chair with the experience of the Honourable Howard Wetston is another signal to us that this government is open and receptive to the views of stakeholders...." That's from Gunars Ceksters, the CEO of Enersource. And I could go on.

It shows there was a genuine willingness to work with consumer groups, with energy stakeholders, to listen to and hear what they have to say. I know there are a lot of

others. I'm trying to think if there is anyone in the great city of Hamilton who put in a submission. I'd have to look closely, but I suspect we did get some good advice from Hamilton.

I would be remiss if I didn't wish a friend of mine in Hamilton who's running for mayor my best in his efforts. I don't agree all the time with that friend, but I know him to be an honest, decent person, and honourable, someone who will work hard and work with people on all sides of the House. I want to wish that friend of mine in Hamilton, the member for Hamilton West and former member for Hamilton Centre, all the very best.

This legislation we're debating today was the result of consultation, and I think that too often we neglect to give credit to the people who in a very real sense make this happen. If I could just list the people at the Ministry of Energy who worked very hard: my very capable deputy minister, Bryne Purchase; Judy Hubert, probably the most outstanding public servant in the Ontario public service, who joins us here today, and my good friend; Rosalyn Lawrence; Helmuth Schumann; John Lang; Betty Morgan; Sheri Bizarro; Kaili Sermat-Harding; Ted Gruetznier; Barry Strader; George Nutter; our lawyers Susan Serena, James Rehob and Mike Lyle; Rose Norohna, Betty Arsenijevic, Elaine Gittens, Marie Cadena and Noreen Hickey, who helped with our OEB consultations; and in addition to the great people in the minister's office: Will Stewart; Lisa Pearson; Dan Miles and Suzanne Bezuk. These people all worked tremendously hard and helped us craft the legislation that is before us.

I would like to underline the balance we're seeking at the Ontario Energy Board. There are two fundamental things that have got to be balanced, particularly in those areas of the board where it's the board's responsibility to substitute for a free market. We obviously can't have distribution systems for natural gas competing with one another. We couldn't have a set of five or six sets of pipelines going up and down every street in Ontario and in industrial areas, so the nature of that distribution business is obviously a monopoly.

The board's mandate there is to act as the balance between the interests of consumers, who need to be protected in the absence of a market—if it's another good or service, you can choose to go across the street to someone else who sells the product or perhaps even substitute the product for a comparable one. You can't do that with respect to the distribution of natural gas. So the board is there to act as a balance between the legitimate interests of consumers who require protection and also the legitimate interests of capital to get a fair and reasonable return on equity. No one in this House, I think, would deny that it's a difficult balance but one that is required.

For example, I was quoting Enersource, a publicly owned company. It's owned 90% by the city of Mississauga—that's the residents and businesses in the city of Mississauga—and 10% owned by Borealis, which is a pension fund of the Ontario municipal employees. It's a

pension fund for those people who require a pension, and what they want is some confidence that if they play by the market rules they'll get the return on equity that they believe they're entitled to. That's why the board has to step in and provide that type of balance. People have to know that if they make investments in Ontario, they'll get a fair return and it won't be done based on the public outcry or the demands of big business; it'll be done based on what's actually before them. So consumer protection and fair treatment for investment are what we seek the board to do.

I say to all members of this House, the legislation we've got in front of us today better equips the board to be able to provide protection for consumers. The legislation before us will serve everyone. We need to have more expeditious decisions. I think it is wrong for something to take 12 to 18 months to come to a decision from its first application before the board. We know about many of these issues years ahead of time. We're going to give the tools to the dedicated staff and team at the Ontario Energy Board that will allow them to get their job done. Some of the timelines can be, perhaps, one of the biggest concerns there.

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There was a huge amount of public concern and public interest with respect to retroactive charges. We heard those loud voices and have come forward with some reforms that help to deal with that and address it head on. With performance measures and with an annual regulatory calendar, what we seek to do is to effectively eliminate the need for retroactive charges. Consumers don't like them, and they don't instill confidence in the regulatory regime, which I think is important for consumers' interests and for investment in the province alike. If we can get into a situation where we can provide a fair and expeditious hearing, together with these reforms, we will effectively eliminate the need for retroactive charges in the province. That is something that is tremendously important.

Some people will say, "Well, you should be retroactive and go back and change things over the last 25 or 30 years." I guess what we're seeking to do with the legislation before us is to deal in a pretty fundamental way with the challenge before us. The legislation that we're bringing forward will do just that.

I will be concluding my remarks and I'm looking forward to—I deliberately have not talked about the new mandate for the board with respect to conservation and alternative energy. I'll leave that to Commissioner Gilchrist to talk about and address.

I was pleased that Howard Wetston, the incoming chair of the Ontario Energy Board, has said very strongly that he wants a role in policy and that there is a legitimate role for the regulator in that. We look forward to receiving his suggestions and his advice on these issues.

I'll turn it over to Commissioner Gilchrist, and I would be remiss if—the more I have the opportunity to meet with stakeholders, people who are advocating green energy and green power, windmills, solar, biomass,

whether it's net metering, whether it's any range of conservation and alternative energy, they all, without a doubt, speak with great affection for their chief advocate within the Ontario government, someone who, while he works with the Ministry of Energy, really is the czar of alternative energy and can work with natural resources on the use of public land, with the Ministry of the Environment on those issues, with the Ministry of Finance on tax issues, and can work with my colleague, the Minister of—

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Natural Resources.

Hon Mr Baird: —Natural Resources, who I work very closely with on an issue in my community with the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre, something he knows I have a tremendous concern about. I am hearing from a number of constituents who want Katie the fox returned to her owners. I've done that in a very public way, asking the minister to give consideration to that.

But the legislation before us today will do a great job. Whether you're a young person coming out of university named Michael Lebrock, this will provide you with better support; whether you're a small business person in Hamilton, this will provide you with better support; whether you're a big business like Stelco or Dofasco, this will help give you greater certainty that there will be someone representing your consumer needs. When we think of consumers, we're not just thinking of residential customers; we're also thinking about industrial customers that depend on electricity to fuel their operations. So I'm very pleased.

I would legitimately ask all members of the House to look at Mr Wetston's background, to look at the legislation before us here today. I know I've had some quiet discussions with some of the opposition members. I would hope they would give consideration to supporting the bill. I don't think it's perfect by any stretch of the imagination, but I think it represents a huge amount of consultation where we didn't just listen to what people said, we heard their message, and we've come forward with, I think, a very outstanding piece of legislation and one with which I think we'll do a great benefit to working families and to enterprise in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr David Christopherson): To continue the lead-off, the member for Scarborough East.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): I'd like to start my comments by thanking Minister Baird for his very kind comments and congratulating him on the content of this bill, a bill that certainly will advance consumer protection. It is long overdue in terms of updating the very structure of the OEB. I want to say further that whatever successes we've achieved so far in advancing the cause of alternative energy and energy conservation we would not have done without the fulsome and complete support of Minister Baird and the Premier himself, as well as the other ministers I am privileged to work with in that regard.

Today we are debating Bill 23, the Ontario Energy Board Consumer Protection and Governance Act, 2003. I think it has to be said at the outset that as important as this bill is, it has to be seen as just one more piece in a comprehensive, integrated energy policy that our government has adopted. It's a policy that was created by listening to the people, understanding their concerns and making sure there are programs and legislation in place to address the concerns of 2003, not 1903.

Our energy policy does many positive things: it protects consumers; ensures that investors get a fair return on their commitment to Ontario's energy future; streamlines the regulatory process; and, perhaps most important, protects the environment. As all the members know, I've had a long and keen interest in the environment. As the provincial Commissioner of Alternative Energy, it's very exciting to be part of a government that's leading us to a cleaner and sustainable energy future.

We are the first government to do more than just talk about clean energy and conservation. In 2005—no later than April 1, 2005, in fact—the Lakeview coal generating plant west of Toronto will stop producing power based on the consumption of coal. We've made the unprecedented commitment to shut down all the province's coal-fired facilities no later than 2015. I think it has to be stressed that it's not just a date picked out of the air. We've said that, hand in hand with the creation of new renewable power generation across Ontario, we will, coincidentally, shut down the dirtiest existing forms of energy generation, namely the coal-fired plants. We are not going to leave people out in the cold, though. The renewable power comes first, before you pull the plug on the coal plants.

We know that the provincial government itself is a very large user of electricity, so we think it's important to lead by example, and make a commitment that 20% of the power we use—not just in this building but in all government agencies and in all offices across Ontario—will come from new green sources of power.

Our recent budget included proposals such as 10-year tax holidays. Unprecedented anywhere in North America, the provincial government has basically walked away from any form of revenue from new green power generation for 10 years. Not only have we said that that generator will pay no income tax, but there will be no increase in the property tax, no increase in the capital tax, a full rebate of the sales tax and an opportunity to take a 100% write-off of any investment in the year that investment is made.

We've put in place corporate incentives, but we didn't stop there. We've already instituted a sales tax rebate that would give consumers a full rebate of all the Ontario sales tax if they purchased either a solar-thermal or a solar-photovoltaic energy system.

We've gone further down the road to conservation by coming up with a rebate program that will return your provincial sales tax if you buy an Energy Star appliance: a washer, a dryer, a dishwasher, a freezer—so far, we've had almost 50,000 applications for that rebate. The re-

fund is pushing \$4 million. In fact, enough power has been saved just in the conversion of those appliances to equal the total annual power consumed by 3,000 homes—a staggering step forward.

I want to make sure that people remember it's this government that made it possible for the wind turbine down on the waterfront here in Toronto, the wind turbine in Pickering and the one on the shore of Lake Huron to be built. It was this government that pledged to allow people who want to install their own renewable electricity generation systems to take advantage of net metering. It was this government that put in place a system where Ontario Power Generation and other generators can now market green power to their customers. It was this government that announced plans that will make Ontario the leader in clean energy technologies.

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To do that, we have undertaken to invest \$20 million to create a centre of excellence for electricity and alternative energy technology in a total of five universities. I'm extremely excited at the opportunity that gives us to attract some of the leading-edge pure research to take us beyond even the technical innovations that have already happened in the renewable energy field into an even more promising and even more affordable renewable power future.

It's clear that energy is a vital part of our economy. Lost somewhat in the debate this past year about the importance of guaranteeing that business and consumers have affordable power is the recognition that it was that low-cost power that was in large measure responsible for attracting all the industry we now take for granted. It was attracting the General Motors, the Fords, the Incos and the Falconbridges to invest private funds, to build their manufacturing facilities and to use Ontario as the base to distribute their goods across North America and, in many cases, around the world. We don't ever want to lose that competitive advantage.

While others may quibble about the structure of the consumer protection we've put in place, the fact remains that our government is committed to two things: making money at the 4.3 cent cap—the plan will break even at worst and make money at best—but just as importantly, that consumers and businesses will continue to have the assurance that there will be rate stability and that they will have the most competitive power we can possibly put into the grid to backstop their efforts to continue to grow their businesses and to continue to make sure their households have affordable sources of power.

That's why last fall Premier Eves protected consumers and set the price of electricity back to 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour. Residential consumers, small businesses and farmers now have the protection they were looking for, and now more than 98% of the province's electricity consumers have their rates frozen until 2006.

It has to be stressed, though, that contrary to some of the mythology that spread after the residential price cap was installed, there are no disincentives for someone interested in bringing new renewable power generation

on line, because the wholesale market continues absolutely open for new generators to bid in their power. It also ensures that the large power consumers continue to have the ability to manage their energy needs through the use of interval meters.

The market remains open for generators, and the proof is the fact that across this province there are companies that are staking out good resources and that are leasing farmland for future use as sites for wind power generators. There are companies that are developing solar photovoltaic manufacturing facilities. In fact, we've gone from zero to three companies in the last year that are building factories to become large-scale manufacturers of solar PV systems.

I recently met with just one wind generation company. They have leased 38,000 acres of land. They have hundreds of test towers already up. They are assessing, over a 12-month period, the wind resource available in some parts of the province that are well known to be likely profitable sites for wind power generation. This one company alone is looking to invest \$1 billion of their own equity to produce at least 400 megawatts of power, but they're not alone.

Another company is talking about 500 megawatts on the shores of Lake Erie and actually in Lake Erie itself. The city of Sudbury has contracted for 90 megawatts of power. There's an application for 34 megawatts down in Prince Edward county, and a company is looking to put 80 megawatts on Wolfe Island, just offshore from Kingston. In fact, across Ontario, from Thunder Bay to Sault Ste Marie to Leamington to Collingwood to Kingston, we have seen an extraordinary expansion in interest since the announcement of our nine-point action plan last November.

I think people can take seriously, with great confidence, the fact that we are committed to a dramatic expansion in wind power and other renewable power, and that the wholesale market continues to be open and able to assimilate that new generation, without any barriers. In fact, I want to really thank my colleagues the Ministers of Finance, Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines, Agriculture, Environment and Energy, who have all recognized that historically there were barriers that stood in the way of new renewable power generation.

For example, no one had ever been forced to deal with the reality that there wasn't even a process to apply to lease crown land as a site for wind generation. It's staggering when you think that through us, through the government, the people of Ontario continue to own 85% of the land mass of this province as crown land. So it stands to reason that at least 85% of the best wind sites were unavailable. There wasn't a process. There was no form, there was no fee structure, and now there is.

I'm very proud to say that virtually every single regulatory tax or other barrier that historically stood in the way of expanding renewable power in this province has been addressed, and the few that haven't are making their way through the cabinet process as we speak. I have great confidence that we'll very shortly be in a position to

announce that they too have been eliminated and we will have addressed every single issue that the wind and water power generators in particular have brought to our attention.

I think at the same time it's important to see the relationship with the OEB and what's happening in expanding the renewable power market. One of the commitments we made last November, at the same time as we made the commitment to the rate freeze and to become the leading jurisdiction in all of North America for the research and development, the manufacturing and the use of alternative energy and energy conservation technologies—we said that the OEB has a role to play in that crusade as well.

The new chair and his colleagues will be expected to work with all the utilities, all the LDCs, to dramatically expand consumer education in their efforts at promoting energy conservation, whether it's demand-side management programs or simply educating consumers in some of the very simple steps they can take personally—in their own lives, in their own homes and in their own businesses—that individually cost almost nothing but in aggregate across the province would pay huge dividends.

These little changes are as simple as taking the three traditional incandescent light bulbs that you use most in your house and changing them to comparable-wattage compact fluorescent bulbs. Every single bulb you convert will, over the course of its life, reduce your demand on the energy system by the equivalent of one tonne of coal. What an incredible image that is. Each light bulb offsets the burning of one tonne of coal. So people who suggest that they are concerned about the environment need do nothing more than invest \$3 or \$4 to buy compact fluorescent bulbs, to install timers, to make sure the lights are turned off when they leave a room and wherever possible recognize the fact that off-peak, we as Ontarians pay less for our power than we do at peak hours. So turning on your dishwasher at 10:30 instead of 6:30, turning on other heavy energy-use appliances at the end of the day, saves, in aggregate, an incredible amount of money.

The OEB will be required to dramatically expand its promotion of these specific and general concepts, and who better to deliver that message than the local utilities? Every month they are sending mailings out to every one of their customers in the form of a bill. But those bills normally have inserts. It's a virtually free way to communicate with every single electricity consumer in this province.

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It isn't a question that the utilities have necessarily been doing something wrong, but the reality is that they have not been as fulsome in their embracing of the importance of energy conservation as they could have, and working with the OEB. I have every confidence, as does Minister Baird, that the utilities will become very active partners and will become, along with the province, responsible for far more efficient use of energy than has been the case in this province in the past.

Our plan is working. We see a future where clean fuels such as natural gas, wind, solar and hydro power will play an increasingly larger role in this province. Over the past few months, we've seen a number of new generators come on line. Many of the members will have heard of the large TransAlta natural gas generating station in Sarnia. But they may not have heard of the opening of the province's first commercial wind farm, the opening of Brascan's 45-megawatt hydroelectric facility near Wawa, the opening of another private dam near Misema and the installation of the wind turbine here on the Toronto waterfront.

Two units at the Bruce nuclear reactor plant will soon be producing power for the first time in years. These are units that would have remained closed if there had not been private sector investment and if this government had not created the environment that made such investment attractive. As well, Ontario Power Generation will soon have the first of its Pickering A units putting power back into the system.

All in all, this summer we expect to have 11% more generation available than we did last year—11% more. When you recognize that there has never been one minute in the history of the province of Ontario that any consumer was denied access to power as a result of supply, that there's never been a supply-related blackout or brownout, adding 11% on top of what was already a well-managed system last year gives us an incredible insurance policy. It's an incredible hedge that protects us even though we know Ontario's economy, each year for the last seven years, has grown faster than any of the other G7 nations, has literally been a leader in the industrialized world in expanding the size of its economy and, hand in hand with that, expanding the needs of its electricity sector. More supply means greater reliability, it means stable prices and it means less reliance on imported power.

It is a fact that had we not had the problem with one of the Bruce reactors and the failure of OPG to bring one of the Pickering reactors on line, as we had expected last summer, we would have had to buy power outside this province, if my memory serves me correctly, a grand total of 14 times for as short as five minutes each. In effect, we would have had no shortfall of power.

It is critically important and it is one of the underpinnings of our action plan that Ontario just doesn't need adequate power, it needs adequate supply of domestic power. Every dollar that leaves our province is a dollar that isn't creating a four- to five-time multiplier effect here in Ontario. That includes a dollar spent on coal that goes to Alberta or natural gas that leaves our province.

We recognize that these aren't things that you change overnight, and that's why we've said that no later than 2015 we will have completed the transition to shut down our coal facilities. But I personally think the time frame will be much tighter than that, because our government recognizes that if we can be putting the money into the Ontario manufacture—in your city of Hamilton, for example—of the steel towers and if we can attract more

manufacturers that currently produce almost all the wind turbines made in the world over in Europe, if we can attract them to set up a North American beachhead and take advantage of the fact that Ontario has almost the lowest provincial tax rates of any province or state anywhere in North America, then obviously we will make sure that we will have captured those dollars to the greatest extent possible.

We disagree with the province of Quebec, which has made a commitment—and I want to give them full marks for having made a commitment—to purchase wind power, but they've attached too many strings to it. In fact, they've said that the winning company will have to open a manufacturing plant in the middle of the Gaspésie, hundreds of miles removed from any other market.

Our government does not believe in inspiring another Bricklin. We believe it is appropriate to eliminate the barriers. It's appropriate to create a tax regime that is the most attractive in all of North America. The fact that our revenues have increased \$16 billion as a result of all of those new companies and all of those new jobs that have been attracted to Ontario since we started cutting taxes I think makes that point better than I ever could.

The reality is that there already is the expertise here in Ontario to be dramatically expanding the use of renewable power. It's not widely known, but again you can take great pride that 40% of the dollar value of all the wind turbines that have ever been erected in Canada were sourced in Ontario, either with Ontario material or Ontario labour. A large portion of that came from steel fabricators in the Hamilton area.

Looking forward, we recognize the OEB will continue to deal with an increasing complexity as more and more generators come on-line, because they won't all be the size of the nuclear facilities at Bruce. They won't even be the size of the TransAlta natural gas facility, which is 440 megawatts of power. There will be literally dozens, indeed hundreds, of small-scale generators attracted into this marketplace. The OEB has been directed to deal with the interconnection problems that have served as a barrier to ensure that there is an easy-to-understand process, an affordable process, for those folks who wish to make an investment, for their own house, their own farm or perhaps on a slightly larger scale, in renewable power.

We want to ensure that all of the technical issues are addressed upfront, and people shouldn't be made to jump through all sorts of hoops or suffer long delays. The OEB will play a significant role in making sure those barriers are eliminated and that people have access in a timely fashion to the most up-to-date and technically adroit set of plans and policies to work with the private sector and ensure that the investments they want to make are made here in Ontario.

We know that Ontario Power Generation and ATCO are nearing completion of the Brighton Beach generating station down in Windsor, OPG and TransCanada Pipelines are in the early stages of a new generating station here in Ontario, and Imperial Oil is building a large

generator at their Sarnia plant. Because that investment is in large measure coming from the private sector, it won't add to the staggering debt that the old Ontario Hydro has left us, a debt of \$38 billion and a debt which, I should say, continues to drop every month, notwithstanding the mythology that has been extant since November 11.

It's true, on the one hand, that capping the consumer rate in that account might have suffered a shortfall, but it's a little bit like saying that your MasterCard bill went up and failing to recognize that you'd make twice as great a payment on your Visa bill each month, because the total debt of all the electricity sector continues to decline. I'm very proud to see that as a trend that our government has ensured, has become institutionalized.

Private investment and the move to cleaner forms of generation have happened because this government has put in place the policies that allowed it to happen. New supply will increase reliability, provide price stability and make for a cleaner environment. It's a remarkable achievement, and I want to congratulate all the players: the private sector and, to the extent that they are now heading in the right direction, the folks at Ontario Power Generation and Hydro One.

In the time I'm left I'd like to note some of what I see as the key elements of Bill 23.

1610

The legislation will make sure that the OEB has an advanced communications role. It's an important step. Decisions that are made by the OEB have long-term and far-reaching implications. The people of Ontario have a right to be properly informed, a right to be kept up to date on board decisions and, most importantly, a right to be told why the OEB made the decisions it did. When it comes to making these decisions, this legislation, if passed, streamlines and speeds up the hearing process, while ensuring that consumers have a chance to offer their views. By speeding up the decision-making process, the legislation, if passed, addresses the issue of retroactive decisions. I spent many years in the retail sector, and I can't imagine contacting customers months later and saying, "By the way, I put the wrong price on that toaster oven. You owe me more money." If passed, Bill 23 will effectively eliminate charges that sit and accumulate month after month.

This proposed legislation also ensures that the OEB is accountable. The legislation establishes an advisory committee of stakeholders, industry representatives and independent members to review the board's performance.

If passed by the Legislature, this bill allows the OEB to become self-financing and it also allows it to attract the best people in the industry.

The proposed legislation will also require the OEB to establish an annual regulatory calendar that outlines their priorities, increases accountability and ensures stringent timelines are established and, most importantly, that they meet those timelines.

The Minister of Energy, in introducing this proposed legislation, noted that he used the recent changes to the Ontario Securities Commission as a model. This made a

lot of sense. The changes that the OSC has implemented have created a stronger and far more effective operation. I am confident that, if passed, the changes that we have outlined in Bill 23 will do the same thing for the Ontario Energy Board.

I am very proud of the proposed changes that this bill will bring to the OEB. I want to congratulate the Premier for ordering the review in the first place, and I congratulate the Minister of Energy for doing a topnotch job of listening and making sure that the energy interests of the people of Ontario will be protected for many years to come. It really has to be seen in concert with all of the other changes that we have brought forward and continue to discuss with the industry and with consumers, whether it's interconnection protocols, net metering, demand-side management, energy conservation, a renewable portfolio standard, crown land leasing, or something as important as the government's procurement of power for its own needs, the 20% commitment to buy power from green sources.

We've also made an announcement that the government will henceforth ensure that all new buildings it funds will be energy-self-sufficient. That's unprecedented, and it too will add to the complexity and challenge that the OEB will have to face in years to come. In the past it was very easy for OEB to have an almost one-to-one relationship with Ontario Power Generation, which had by far the overwhelming share of the electricity generation market. But in the future the OEB will be dealing with a vast assortment of generators, large and small. They will come from the traditional wind, nuclear and natural gas forms of generation. But they will also be expanded into biomass and geothermal. There will even be folks who use off-peak power to produce hydrogen, store it and then feed it back into the grid during peak hours. All of these folks need to be encouraged, and the changes we're putting into this bill will do just that.

I'd just like to close by saying, on behalf of Mr Baird, that he also wanted to recognize Paula Day for all of her hard work on OEB reform.

As my very final thought, given that we're approaching the end of this session and it may be my last time to make this comment and pose this question, I would like to ask from all the members their consideration—I know I continue to have the support of members from all parties, the members for Elgin-Middlesex-London, Trinity-Spadina, Whitby-Ajax, Parkdale-High Park, Kitchener Centre and Toronto-Danforth to name just a few—to seek unanimous consent to put the question on third reading for the organ donation bill. There are people literally dying every week waiting on that bill, and I would ask the consideration of the members to follow up on the unanimous support it had at second reading. I would ask consideration to put the question for third reading on that bill.

The Acting Speaker: Am I understanding that you're requesting that unanimous consent now?

Mr Gilchrist: Yes.

The Acting Speaker: It's now been put before the House, a request for unanimous consent. You've heard what it's for. If that doesn't need to be repeated, then I will ask, is there unanimous consent?

I'm sorry, I heard a few noes.

The time for the leadoff debate has now expired.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Hang on. We're not going there.

It's now time for questions and comments. Members have up to two minutes.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): Isn't this precious? A government that has been in place for eight years is now telling us about how wonderful their energy policy is.

I want to tell you I just received news today that the good folks at the Legion in Wawa have just been debating whether they can keep their Legion open, because the electricity bill at the Legion in Wawa is now \$3,200 a month. President Dick Watson has called me about this. He is busily getting some petitions together. I have talked to people, including the district governor, Peter Vintinner, about this. It's not just the Wawa Legion, it's many of the service clubs. I know we've had trouble at Richards Landing, at St Joseph Island, where they're facing the same kind of problem. Thessalon is having the same kind of problem. It's because we have an energy policy that is just absolutely at odds with all reality. Especially in the Great Lakes Power area, we have a situation where consumers are paying roughly twice what they did the year before the government provided us with their new re-regulation deregulation policy. It is unacceptable to seniors in the community. Anybody on a fixed income, small businesses, are being ravaged by this policy. To hear the precious, wonderful words about how well we're doing drives a lot of us a little bit crazy.

Great Lakes Power promised the consumers within its area a 20% decrease in price. You know what? They don't have it. Why don't they have it? When we made inquiries, it's because your OEB has not approved the reduction in electricity prices. This is just a shame.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): It's a pleasure for me to participate in the debate. The sad reality is that we're here with a bill that tries to make hydro privatization and deregulation a little bit better and there isn't anything that's going to make hydro privatization and deregulation better except to get rid of the whole thing and return to public power. That's the kind of bill we should debating in the Legislature today, instead of Bill 23, which, just like the bill the Conservatives brought in in the fall, which the Liberals supported, attempts to cover up the mess instead of clean up the mess.

The reality is that many big companies right across northern Ontario are now in the process of laying off workers because of high hydro bills. We have the example in Falconbridge where a number of workers are going to be laid off for an extended period of time,

directly related to hydro; problems at Dubreuilville Forest Products; problems in Wawa; problems in the mine outside of Wawa; problems in factories and facilities and plants in one community after another right across northern Ontario. I suspect high hydro was part of the concern DaimlerChrysler had with respect to its decision on Windsor as well.

The problem hasn't gone away. The problem hasn't been fixed. The rate caps that the government brought in last November, which were supported by the Liberals, hide the mess, hide the true cost that we're going to have to pay once those caps come off. What is that cost already? About half a billion dollars that's going to be added on to the backs of taxpayers because of high hydro rates, instead of getting rid of those rates by getting rid of hydro privatization. It didn't work in California. It didn't work in Alberta. It didn't work in Montana. There was no reason it was going to work here, and it didn't. That's why the government, in November, was forced to bring in the rate caps and the rebates, to hide the mess.

I say, get rid of Bill 23. Bring in a bill that brings back public power.

1620

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I just want to take the two minutes to comment that my colleagues across the way are right with respect to Wawa. Our government should be doing more with the OEB. I note that the mill at Dubreuilville is laying off employees, in part because of the high distribution costs set by Great Lakes Power and in part because of softwood lumber and other forestry-related issues.

I call upon my own energy minister, my own cabinet and my own government to help Wawa. The solution that they're working on, as all members are aware, is to bring the distribution system of Wawa and Great Lakes Power into the rural and remote rate subsidy program. I think that's what the solution should be. I just want to assure members that they are working on that.

I appreciate the encouragement of people like Mike Brown and Ms Martel, in terms of encouraging the government to move forward. It is a serious issue—

Ms Martel: Be clear on what I encouraged. Come on.

Hon Mr Wilson:—now, Shelley, be good—and one that we need to deal with sooner rather than later. I appreciate the encouragement from across the way. I think there is a solution.

But remember that it's not so much the price of power that's the main issue in Wawa and a few other pockets across the north; it's the distribution charges. In this case, the distribution charges aren't in the hands of the government; they're with Great Lakes Power and other distributors.

Where we can protect consumers, we should move to do so. I agree with other northern members. I, as the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, call upon my own colleagues to get working a little faster on this portfolio and get moving.

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): Just to add to the comments that both ministers have made with respect to the second reading of Bill 23, An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 and the Municipal Franchises Act in respect of consumer protection, the government has been diddling for eight-plus years now with respect to doing something about not only the provision of energy itself but the cost of that energy for individual members and the business public as well.

Now that they see themselves painted into a corner, they're trying to rush and say, "We're going to amend this, we're going to amend that, we're going to do this, we're going to do that," including the announcement the other day of probably using some generators at a cost of \$100 million for the summer for providing some extra energy. Where have they been? The symptoms were out there, not yesterday or last year but well ahead of time. They had all the time in the world to provide for the necessities of the people which they are saying we have to provide. Of course, now that they have seen the effect of not only the energy cost and the shortage of energy in the last year or so, they are rushing to say, "We have to do this; we have to do that."

I think the people of Ontario, the business community, expected a lot more from this government. Unfortunately, we are down to the wire and they are rushing with a number of announcements. I do hope that we don't have to end up in the same situation as this past year.

The Acting Speaker: Now to respond, the member for Scarborough East has up to two minutes.

Mr Gilchrist: I can certainly spend two minutes expressing my disappointment that the members of the Liberals and NDP would not agree to move forward on an important private member's bill, but I will fight the urge.

The comments of the last member, from York West, certainly bear some response, because there's no doubt that the mythology that was perpetuated last year continues to be advanced by the opposition party, particularly the Liberals, that somehow the market went haywire.

The fact of the matter is that every consumer in this province gets a bill that's somewhere in the 10-cent to 11-cent range. The wholesale part of their bill went from 4.3 to 5.2 cents on the day that the cap was reinstalled. For those following me on the math, that means a 9% increase was attributable to the increase in the price of power.

Having said that, the member has conveniently overlooked the fact that just this past month, without the return to service of three nuclear plants expected over the next few weeks, the price of power had already come back down to 4.51 cents. When you recognize that half of the power that OPG sells, over 3.8 cents, gets returned as a rebate to consumers, it's a wash. In fact, arguably, the province was slightly ahead last month. But at worse, it was a wash. The reality is, the member opposite knows full well that this plan will pay for itself. The suggestion that somehow we shouldn't protect businesses, farmers and consumers by giving them affordable power, as has

been the hallmark of Ontario, certainly all of my life, is shameful. You should be applauding the reinstatement of the cap, applauding our moves to create new generation, and applauding our elimination of all of the barriers that stood in the way when you and the NDP were in government. But instead, you'd rather nitpick. I hope, on the last day, you'll see fit to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker: The floor is now open for further debate.

Mr Bradley: I feel a bit inadequate speaking after the alternative energy czar of the province, as he's referred to, or the commissioner. It seems that they've had a few commissioners on the other side, for various reasons. It sounds like it's very distinguished, but I find the word "commissioner" is kind of an American term.

I digress from the bill itself. It is worthy of some comment. Quite obviously, after eight years in power, the government has suddenly discovered that the Ontario Energy Board required some considerable change. You will recall, Speaker, because you were in the House listening attentively last fall when the government was in full crisis over the electrical power—by the way, I should say to the table that I am forgoing the lead. What's the terminology I use?

Interjection: You're supposed to stand down the lead.

Mr Bradley: I stand down the lead, so I'm actually on a 20-minute speech. Is that OK? You can change the clock on that.

The Acting Speaker: If I can just advise the member for St Catharines, we're going to need unanimous consent to stand that down. Do I consider that to be put to the House?

Mr Bradley: Yes.

The Acting Speaker: There's a request to stand down the leadoff debate of the official opposition. Is it agreed? I hear agreement. You may now continue in regular rotation.

Mr Bradley: Thank you very much. I was looking for the actual terminology. It's "stand down."

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: I know you were eager to hear me for an hour, but you'll have to put up with 20 minutes only today. I assure you of that.

As I was saying to you, Mr Speaker, you were aware when the government was in full crisis last fall and wondering what on earth it was going to do because the price of electrical power in the province was skyrocketing. People were calling constituency offices on an hourly basis with stories of genuine concern and hardship. This was not confined only to individual citizens, a lot of them in lower-income brackets, but there were also businesses and companies who were calling and saying, "This is just outrageous, what is happening."

Again, it happened because the government, and I must say personally that I happen to disagree with this, was going to open the market and privatize it. When they did so, there was obviously not adequate time given—if the government was going to proceed in that direction—and adequate consideration to the ramifications of it and

looking at the experience of other jurisdictions. I noted at that time, and you'll recall this habit—you're neutral as you sit in the chair; when you sit in your own chair you're allowed to be partisan—but the first thing this government does when there's some good news is that it gets out its third hand and pats itself on the back. It's large as life to accept the credit, but when there's some responsibility when the news is bad, the fingers start pointing elsewhere. I recall on that occasion that the fingers were pointing at the chair of the energy board, Floyd Laughren, the former Minister of Finance for the province and long-term member of the Legislature. Here they were blaming a person whom they'd referred to as a socialist in years gone by for not being, shall I say, socialist enough in controlling energy prices in the province. I found that both amusing and inaccurate that they would be pointing the finger at Mr Laughren on that occasion.

I have to say that once in a while you have to provide even a modest compliment to the government. If you want to know where they might have gotten this idea to reform the Ontario Energy Board, let me read a letter that I wrote to the Premier on September 27, 2002, before we heard anything about this bill coming into effect.

1630

"Dear Premier

"As you would be aware, electrical power consumers across Ontario have been receiving bills which have reflected enormous increases in the cost of electricity provided to their homes and businesses and they have been expressing justifiable outrage at the magnitude of these increases.

"The Ontario Energy Board was established to deal with the field of energy and one of its responsibilities relates to the cost of electricity to consumers in Ontario.

"Those who have been receiving their electricity bills containing dramatic increases have asked how these increases can be justified and have asked why the Ontario Energy Board, appointed by you, has permitted the electrical utilities to charge such outrageous prices for this commodity.

"It has become clear that the Ontario Energy Board has neither the staff nor the financial resources to carry out its responsibilities appropriately and in addition to this, it is in the position of having to reflect government policy.

"I am writing to you to recommend that you strengthen the Ontario Energy Board significantly by providing it with the resources and personnel to carry out its responsibilities and by giving it direction to protect consumers in this province from unjustified increases in the cost of energy.

"It is obvious that the energy companies have the staff and expertise to prepare their cases which come before the board and that those in opposition to proposed rate increases have, at best, meagre resources to oppose the applications by electrical and gas companies. This places an even greater onus on the employees and members of the Ontario Energy Board to acquire the expertise to

analyze these proposals carefully and to protect consumers from unjustified increases in costs.

"It is important that you deal with this matter at the very earliest opportunity to protect consumers from further gouging.

"As you know, in the past, there was a select committee on hydro affairs and I think that most people would agree that it did an excellent job of dealing with matters related to electrical power in Ontario.

"It is apparent, Premier, that this committee should be re-established with a specific mandate to act as a watchdog on electrical power in this province and I would urge you to act upon this suggestion immediately."

The Premier has accepted one of the two recommendations I have made. I think what happened at the time was that they were floundering and looking for ideas and along came a letter from the member for St Catharines that had a positive suggestion, and in an act of larceny—is that a permitted word? I guess it is, because I'm saying it in a nice way—the government stole my idea and tried to implement it in this legislation.

I must say I have to be quite reasonable this afternoon in saying that the idea of changing the energy board, even though it's eight years after the government got in power, has some resonance with me. I do believe that what the government had done in the past was, first of all, deliberately weaken the energy board by not providing the necessary funding and staff to carry out its responsibilities. That must sound familiar to you as a former labour critic; we saw that happen in the Ministry of Labour. We've seen it happen in the Ministry of Natural Resources. The minister is here today, and I'm here to help him out by suggesting that he get more resources and staff for his ministry and more clout for his ministry to be able to do the job appropriately. The Ontario Energy Board needs that, and the Ministry of the Environment needs it. Instead what we're getting is a tax cut for the wealthiest in the province, particularly the corporations.

I would rather see the Minister of Natural Resources, who is here today, get the resources rather than give away yet another tax gift to corporations in Ontario that really don't need it. I know he'd be pleased with that suggestion.

There's the letter of September 27, 2002, and here we are in June. We weren't even expected to sit. Everybody in the world expected an election would be over by now, that the government would have its budget and that it would go to the people because there have been millions upon millions of dollars spent on taxpayer-paid government advertising that has been taking place on the airwaves. If you turn on Channel 11 in your community, Cable 12, CH Television—if you turn on any channel—you've got government propaganda on there, paid for by the taxpayer. If you open the newspapers, there are full-page ads. If you open Maclean's magazine, there's a 30-page insert costing hundreds of thousands of dollars. When you go to your mailbox, you pull out glossy

pamphlets telling you what a great job the government is doing.

You and I would say that would be fine, Mr Speaker, if the Conservative Party were paying. But instead the grateful taxpayer—in this case, the ungrateful taxpayer—of Ontario is forced to assume that burdensome cost.

Does the bill have some merit? There are provisions in it that are worthy of consideration, and favourable consideration at that. But it certainly doesn't go as far as we would like to see it go.

The government has not yet dealt in a meaningful way with energy conservation. I suspect they're now cooking up in the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Energy some program where they can advertise. There won't be anything meaningful in conservation; they'll have a big advertising program going on. If they can get the Premier into it, they'll do it; if there has been too much adverse publicity, they'll keep the Premier out of the advertising.

There's no question that the cheapest way to meet the problem of supply in the province is to reduce the need, and you can do that through conservation. When people have their backs to the wall in terms of costs and availability, that's where you find conservation. The state of California, which went through some chaos over the past few years, found that when it got its back to the wall, it went to its consumers and said, "This is how we can save electrical power," and it was a very effective program to try to save electrical power.

This government cancelled programs that the previous Liberal and New Democratic Party governments had brought in to effect an Ontario for energy conservation. They cancelled those programs and tossed them out. Now they would like to bring them back. They'd like to call the member for Scarborough East the commissioner of alternative fuels and are dangling a few of those carrots in front of us.

By the way, I want to say that the select committee on alternative fuels was a very interesting experience. I like select committees, because they tend to have people check their partisan hats at the door. I know that the Minister of Natural Resources was excited to be on the committee, even temporarily, with some of his own assiduous government members, who were certainly wonderful to work with on that occasion, and the opposition members. I'll tell you, there was a report put out that was very good, I think, a very good report. Unfortunately, few of the recommendations are going to be implemented in any meaningful way.

As well, there's no reference in here to the pollution caused by the production of electricity in this province. I believe that the coal-fired plants have a major impact on air quality and water quality. People ask, "How does it affect water quality?" The St Catharines Standard is running a series of five or six articles at the present time on the state of the Great Lakes. Remember that the Great Lakes and other waterways are impacted by deposition coming from the air—from industrial pollution and from pollution produced by electrical plants in this province

that are coal-fired. It seems to me the government is not moving nearly as quickly as it could to address that particular issue. The Nanticoke plant belches out pollutants. Pilots tell me that when you're flying, you can see the pollutants, or if you're in the CN Tour, that pollutant line comes over our part of the province, the Hamilton-Niagara area, and into New York state. The people in New York state are agitated by that, and it happens elsewhere in the province.

I was watching Bob Rae, the former leader of the New Democratic Party, on Focus Ontario on Saturday. He was making a point that is interesting, and I guess nobody really wants to address it very aggressively at this time. He was wondering how you can buy power at a wholesale rate of about six cents—I'll just use that as an example—and then sell it at 4.3 cents and not have something wrong with that. Who in business would run an operation that way?

There's a way to bring down that power price, and that is to ensure there is sufficient capacity out there and that there are conservation programs. So we need that demand-and-supply circumstance to help solve that problem. The government, however, has got the worst of both worlds. It headed off in a privatization mode and then it pulled back from that, and even the people in the private sector who wanted to invest said, "The government doesn't know where it's going on this, so we're not going to invest." My preference, of course, is for Ontario Power Generation, the public utility, to provide the power in this province.

Dr Joseph Kushner of Brock University, a member of St Catharines city council and a member of the local hydro commission, has written extensively on the impact of government policy on local hydroelectric commissions. He points out one thing—I don't want to isolate all of them; he's written in *Municipal World* and other publications—but he points out that one of the things that has happened is that they become secretive. For instance, now you can't know how much the people in the upper echelons of our local commission are making—not that that's the primary thing people are looking for. Because they're a competing company now, supposedly, they do not reveal facts and figures for the local people. That's a step backward.

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The regulations which have been imposed on these local utilities represent red tape that they believe is not positive red tape. In other words, they could produce electrical power in a more efficient fashion without all these rules and regulations that have been imposed on them. So that's something that has to be looked at.

I know that initially some of the municipalities had councillors who wanted to sell the local utility, just as this government has a fire sale every time it has a problem with money. During the last election they sold Highway 407 for \$3 billion even though it was worth \$10 billion, just so they could show a budgetary surplus for that election. We hear that they're going to have to find

something to sell to achieve the same thing before this election.

So there were people on councils who wanted to sell it; I was against that. There were people who wanted to run it as a profitable business paying dividends.

You have your mind, to a certain extent, on municipal matters right now—I almost said "Mr Mayor"; sorry, a Freudian slip there—Mr Speaker, in Hamilton, but what they want to do is use the profit gained from a local utility so they don't have to raise property taxes. They can say, "Look, we don't have any property tax increase," but people are paying more for their hydro-electric power.

My preference would be to have a nonprofit local utility with openness to the public providing power at cost. I understand the need for a reserve fund to be built up, but essentially power at cost.

I also want to say that I do not have the same confidence that the two government members have expressed on the ability to get power from the Bruce nuclear station and the Pickering nuclear station in a timely fashion. We have had three or four delays so far on firm deadlines to get that power back on-stream. It is way, way over cost—billions of dollars over the estimated cost—and way behind schedule.

Finally, at the last moment, they found a former Tory cabinet minister to head up a commission to look into it. I don't think that will be a very thorough review; not the kind of objective review I would look at. I find that unfortunate, because I think we needed to have a commission to look at that—a public inquiry, if you will—to assess what went wrong—not so much to pin the blame on the government; they're wearing that blame now—but rather to see where the mistakes were made so we don't repeat those in the future.

I want to emphasize again that I believe there's a need for a select committee on hydro affairs. I've sat on that in years gone by. I describe it as a watchdog over hydro affairs. I can't think of a government, if I want to be ecumenical and nonpartisan today, that has controlled Ontario Hydro. I've seen Ontario Hydro control lots of governments; I haven't seen the opposite. Therefore, I think a select committee of the Legislature would be helpful, the independent thinking of the committee.

The member for London West is here. He has some ideas on these matters, and I think that would work very well. I would like to see him on such a committee. If it were at least struck at this time, he would be on it. Whether any of us would be on it after the next election is up to the electorate to make that decision.

People tricked into signing contracts: the Ontario Energy Board didn't have the resources to deal with that. There were a lot of people who were just—I don't usually use these terms—"ripped off" by people coming door-to-door and using high-pressure tactics to get people to sign contracts. There were some people who even forged names on contracts; my friend Jean-Marc Lalonde experienced that at his own office. That was not adequately handled. Obviously, the Ontario Energy Board

would need more power, more resources and more clout to be able to deal with that situation adequately.

What I'm interested in as well, now that I still have a couple of minutes left, is who is getting these contracts for the temporary generators. Somebody told me the other day—and the government will correct me if I'm wrong, I'm sure—that they looked down the list of the people, and there were companies that had contributed to the Conservative Party rather significantly. That's probably purely coincidental. I don't want to make any accusations. It's probably a coincidence that a lot of the companies which are getting those contracts had given big donations to the Conservative Party. I can't think that there would be anything malicious in there, but if someone had a suspicious mind, he or she would come to the conclusion that one and one was two. I'll leave that for others to investigate and find out about.

I also know that since 1995 the price of electricity—I was given this figure by a reliable person, my staff person—has increased by some 142% in Ontario.

The last thing I want to mention is Beck 3. You'll say, "What does it have to do with this?" It has nothing to do with it, but I have a couple of seconds left to say it. I remember going down to Niagara Falls and advocating for the expansion of the tunnels at what we call the Beck 3 project, the generating station in Niagara Falls. My good friend the czar of all alternative energy at the time, when Dalton McGuinty and I were down there recommending this, said, "It can't be done. It's going to cost too much and it's impossible." My friend from Niagara Falls suggested that we were living in another world if we thought that could happen. And lo and behold, when they got into a crisis, they all came down and announced, "We're going to have a Beck 3 project." Well, I'm delighted with that, but as I say, the road to Damascus is very crowded these days.

The Acting Speaker: Members now have up to two minutes for questions or comments.

Ms Martel: I noted that the member for St Catharines talked about the former chair of the OEB, and I think he forgot to mention that in the bill it appears—and I say "it appears"—that the new chair is going to be making more than three times the salary of former chair Floyd Laughren.

Mr Bradley: I did not know that. Wow.

Ms Martel: Now, I say "it appears." I want to be very careful, but it looks to me like shades of Eleanor Clitheroe all over again. Wasn't it enough that there was a yacht and a car and a driver for the kids and \$6 million if she had to leave? Where does this end? I look at what the government wants to do with respect to the OEB, and I say it appears—I'm trying to clarify—that we're just heading down that privatization road once again in terms of the OEB acting now like people in the private sector. And where will that take us? It didn't take us to a very positive situation with respect to Hydro One, and I don't think it's going to do much good with the passage of this bill.

As I said earlier, we shouldn't be dealing with Bill 23; we should be here talking about how to end hydro privatization and deregulation. The bill that's before us attempts to fix a situation that is fundamentally, and I think fatally, flawed; that is, the bill tries to give the OEB some power to try to fix a bit of the mess with respect to hydro privatization. We're not going to be able to fix the mess. It hasn't been fixed with the rate caps and the rebates. That papered over the mess; that covered it up. I think the government hopes that will get them through the next election and then they'll blow off the rate caps, just like Klein did in Alberta after the public paid \$2.3 billion for the pleasure of having private power. But it doesn't fix the mess, and that's what we should be doing: dealing with a bill that gets rid of hydro privatization and deregulation.

Mr Gilchrist: There's no doubt the member opposite, not surprisingly—they do this in every bill—would rather talk about all sorts of things other than the content of the bill itself. In fact, I think some of his speech was as good an expository of why you would need this bill as I could ever come up with. The reality is, it does fix past problems. Talking about issues that occurred eight, 10, 20 years ago that your government didn't fix and the NDP didn't fix, standing here and suggesting that you threw up your hands and cried uncle in the face of the awesome power of Ontario Hydro—and you put it on the record here today that they were the tail wagging your dog—is a staggering admission, but it's the reinforcement of why we have moved forward.

I didn't hear you say that any of the issues to expand consumer protection, to expand access, to eliminate retroactive charges, any of those things were bad. So maybe in the two-minute summary, you'll have a chance to stand up and say which specific sections of the bill we're debating you think are a problem. We would be more than happy to hear your comments, as we always are when there is reasoned and rationed debate in this House. If you want to simply finger-point or look in your rear-view mirror, there's not a lot I'm going to disagree with. It's precisely because there have been problems in the system that we have brought forward a far more progressive, arm's-length approach to the regulator out in the electricity sector.

The suggestion that the price of power has increased 142% is really quite remarkable. You might want to name the name of the staffer and give some hard numbers. It's fun with numbers in here sometimes. Remember, it was capped at 4.3 cents back in 1995; it's capped at 4.3 cents today. The math class I went to says that that's not a 142% increase; it's exactly the same price.

1650

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I'm pleased to be able to comment on the remarks made by the member for St Catharines. I believe that there are few people in the House as qualified to speak on this issue as the member for St Catharines. Certainly, he spells out clearly that the cheapest way to meet the needs of the province is to reduce the need. He also mentioned that coal-fired plants

have a major impact on our environment; that's worth repeating because it's a very significant point for now and the future.

What he was saying, really, is that good energy conservation is good energy management; good energy management, obviously then, becomes good energy conservation. I believe that it's something that all of us in this House would do well to preach to the people that we represent and the people across Ontario: that we all have a hand in this and ensuring that we have adequate energy for the future.

The select committee on hydro affairs is a very important initiative that I wish someone had the courage to champion because it is a very necessary thing for the future.

I also think that it's important for us to understand that this bill, Bill 23, gives enormous powers to the government again. We're looking at an advisory committee that's going to be hand-picked by the government. We all know from historical evidence that that's not the best way to go. I think this government will run into serious problems with that. I also think that consumers who have been negatively impacted in the past have no protection with this legislation, so I think there's a lot to object to with this bill.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): It's always a pleasure to listen to the member for St Catharines. He speaks in measured tones but he usually gets out what needs to be said. I commend his environmental stance about us needing to reduce the needs. It's all-important, of course, to say that we need more electrical capacity, but I would suggest that we may not need that capacity if all of us learned to be just a little bit more energy-efficient. At the same time, we would not need the capacity of the coal-fired plants which we fire up as soon as the weather starts to get hot. We produce smog all over this province, and we would not need to do that at all were we just a little bit more efficient in terms of our electrical needs, particularly in the summer months but this time it's not unique to the summer months.

I was also quite impressed with what he had to talk about on the nature of the new board that might be coming in and looking at who that that new board might be. We have the name of a chairman but we don't know who all the players are going to be—how many of them are going to be consumers; we don't know how many of them are going to be environmentalists. I would suggest that if there's one thing that this new board is going to need, it's some high-powered, professional, dedicated environmentalists who can look into where our electricity is going to come from in terms of renewable energy, even though that always will cost more. Maybe I shouldn't say "always," because technology is a wonderful thing and those costs may be starting to come down, but we certainly do need to look at what he has talked about in terms of hand-picking a board that can work. Now, I'm not suggesting for a minute—I think the board is necessary, and I'll get into that when it's my turn to speak.

The Acting Speaker: The member for St Catharines now has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr Bradley: I like this exercise of being able to respond. First of all, the member for Nickel Belt appropriately raised the issue of the fact that the new chair will be making three times what the last chair did. I was not aware of the exact figures that she talked about, but it is interesting and it certainly fits the pattern of how this government has dealt with Ontario Power Generation and anything to do with electricity. The sky seems to be the limit in terms of salaries and perks. But for many months, the sky was also the limit in terms of the costs to the consumer.

The member for Scarborough East talked about the content of the bill. I thought he addressed that very appropriately. Certainly it is a long time in coming with this government. It was only when it got into a crisis, in which it had to be seen to be reacting, and only after the Premier received a letter from me making some concrete suggestions on how he might deal with this matter, that we had any action take place.

The member for Sudbury emphasizes a need for a select committee on hydro affairs. For members of this House's edification, I recall that back in 1979-80, the select committee on hydro affairs of the day, in a minority Parliament, was dealing with the problem of the boilers at Pickering nuclear generating station. How nice it would be to have that committee back in action.

The member for Beaches-East York underlined, I think appropriately, the need for having environmentalists on this board. I happen to be the Chair of the standing committee on government agencies, which deals with government appointments. I am neutral, so I can't observe what is happening, but others on the committee, in the opposition, have told me that there is a preponderance of adherence to the Conservative Party. Those who have made donations and worked hard in Conservative campaigns appear to get appointments. As the neutral Chair, I can't make that observation, but others certainly have done so.

The Acting Speaker: It is now time for the leadoff debate for the third party.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I intend to use the full hour, because obviously there is a lot to speak about here. So without further ado, let's get started.

I want to review just the last few years. I want to review a government that said the deregulation and privatization of our hydro system weren't going to cost people more money; they weren't going to drive up their electricity bills. I want to review the statements: "Gee, they replace energy ministers about every six months because that's how long it takes them to lose their credibility." Let's see, there was Norm Sterling, then there was Wilson, then there was Stockwell and now there's poor John Baird, who's left holding the bag after what everyone else said has been proven to be false. Chris Stockwell: "There won't be any electricity shortages." Last summer, virtually every second week,

the IMO was saying to people, "Please turn down your air conditioner, please turn out the lights, before we have a brownout or a blackout."

That is the history, and now the reality, of the statements of this government. Go across this province and ask people to take out their hydro bill now and compare it with their hydro bill of two years ago and they will show you that it has doubled. The hydro bill is twice what it used to be. This government wants to say, "Oh, yes, but we froze the rate." But if anyone looks at their hydro bill now, they find 10 bills on the hydro bill, and when you add up the 10 different items, the figure at the bottom is twice what it used to be.

Is this legislation going to do anything about that? No. Is it going to do anything in terms of making people's hydroelectricity more affordable? Not a thing. Is it going to do anything about the fact that the government had to go out and pay \$100 million this summer for emergency generators—\$250,000 a megawatt? Is it going to do anything to ease that supply situation? No. Is it going to do anything for those people across the province who had these private energy marketers come to their doorstep, lie to them, manipulate them and intimidate them into signing contracts which cause people to have to pay far more for their electricity? Is it going to do anything about that? No. Nothing.

1700

What is this bill going to do? Not much at all. This is another effort by a desperate government to try to cover up the problem they've created, to try to cover up the fact that we are in danger of losing Ontario's electricity independence, that we're in grave danger of not having enough electricity, and that for all kinds of industries, businesses and just individual people across this province, paying the hydro bill is now a serious problem. This bill won't do a damned thing about any of those problems, but it's another propaganda effort by the government to try to cover up and temporarily hide the problem, hoping they can get through the next election. It's not going to work, because more and more people across this province are becoming very aware of how serious the problems are and about the fact that this government doesn't have any answers. In fact, virtually everything it does is making the problem worse.

I just want to discuss for a minute the magnitude of the problem, what we're really talking about here.

The reality of Ontario's economy for the past 80 years has been that it was built upon the availability of an affordable supply of electricity and a reliable and predictable supply of electricity. Speaker, you're from Hamilton. I can tell you that Hamilton today would not have a steel industry and the thousands of jobs that depend upon that steel industry but for the fact that we had public power in Ontario, power available at cost; not cost plus 40% profit for this guy, a 10% fee for somebody over here and a 20% commission for someone over there but public power, power at cost. That is what brought the steel industry to Hamilton.

I can tell you that those people who come from places like Oshawa, Whitby, Oakville, Windsor or London-St Thomas, where we see a number of auto assembly plants—but for the existence of public power, publicly owned hydroelectricity providing electricity at cost, we would not have an auto assembly industry in this province, nor an auto parts industry either. These are all industries that are heavily dependent upon electricity. It forms a very big part of their daily cost of doing business. What attracted them to Ontario was the availability of affordable hydroelectricity and the reliable, predictable and dependable provision of hydroelectricity in the province.

Let's go to the pulp and paper industry across northern Ontario, another very intensive user of hydroelectricity. Virtually all of those paper machines and all the equipment you find in a paper mill run on electricity. If the price of electricity goes too high, these mills shut down. The sawmill industry, the mining industry, the smelting industry, the refining industry of northern Ontario, the mines in Sudbury, Timmins and Red Lake, all of these are heavily dependent upon an affordable, reliable supply of electricity. That has been the economic underpinning of Ontario. That is the fundamental underpinning of Ontario's economy: the existence of public power, affordable power, reliable power, power at cost.

What has this government done? What they've done is, they've said, "We no longer believe in power at cost." This is a government that says you should invite all of the fee takers, the commission takers and the profit takers into the system and, if it results in the price of hydro doubling or tripling, that's OK.

The evidence is occurring across this province that it's not OK. Just a few weeks ago the business reporter in the Toronto Globe and Mail, Eric Reguly—not a friend of mine but a former friend of the government—pointed out that one of the reasons DaimlerChrysler decided not to build a new assembly plant, not to establish 2,500 new jobs in the Windsor area, is because they looked at the predicted price of power in this government's privatized, deregulated hydro market and said, "This is too expensive. It is not economic for us to build a new assembly plant here when you can see predicted power rates that are this high." That was in southern Ontario.

The employers in Belleville—the Belleville area represents something in the neighbourhood of 35,000 jobs—literally have petitioned this government, pointing out that privatized and deregulated hydroelectricity is not only terminating some existing jobs, but is writing off the possibility of establishing new businesses, new industries and new jobs. Why? Because the potential businesses, the potential industries are saying, "We cannot afford these power prices. We cannot afford them."

Let's go further afield. In my riding of Kenora there is a paper mill owned by Abitibi Consolidated. The price of their electricity in a deregulated, privatized market has become too expensive for them to run the paper mill some weeks. In a regulated, not-for-profit, power-at-cost market, they could predict what their hydro price was

going to be, what their costs were going to be, what they had to charge for their paper and how they had to manage their other costs so they could stay in business. But on too many occasions this winter, they would come to work on a Monday morning and discover that the price of electricity in the privatized market—which is what they have to pay, because most industries and most businesses are not covered by these phony rate caps; they have to pay that completely privatized, deregulated price—was not 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour, which is what this government wants you to believe, but 39 cents, 40 cents and 45 cents a kilowatt hour. You didn't have to get out the calculator to figure out that they couldn't make paper that week. So they tell everyone, "We're shutting down for the next two weeks. You're on layoff. We can't afford to make paper."

The Abitibi mill in Kenora is not unique. Tembec's mill at Smooth Rock Falls is going to shut down and lay off people. What is a fundamental part of the problem? The price of electricity. They cannot afford to pay a price for electricity that is up there at 20 cents, 30 cents, 40 cents a kilowatt hour. Some 500 jobs, the heart of a community, and lots of other jobs are dependent on it. Why? Once again, this government says, "Oh, it's just fine to privatize and deregulate our electricity system. It won't have any effect." Well, it's killing job after job.

Falconbridge in Timmins is shutting down their refinery, not for two months or three months but what looks like five months this summer—500 jobs, 500 people on layoff. Why? They can't afford the price of privatized, deregulated hydroelectricity. In fact, I'm told that they are now even looking at moving some of the operation permanently into Quebec. Why? Because Quebec has had the wisdom to understand that privatized, deregulated electricity is a job killer. Quebec has had the wisdom to understand that having not-for-profit, power-at-cost, publicly owned hydro is a fundamental economic advantage. So Falconbridge can move much of their smelting to Quebec, lower their costs substantially, but it potentially kills about 500 jobs in Ontario.

Let's go to Wawa. I invite all the government members to go to Wawa. You should really go to Wawa, because you know what? They are no less than five hydro dams literally within the municipal limits of Wawa. It's up there in the rocks above Lake Superior, so it's simply falling water that goes through those dams and through the turbines. Do you know what it costs to produce hydroelectricity in those five hydro dams that are within the geographic boundary of Wawa? It only costs about half a cent a kilowatt hour. But in the privatized, deregulated market, are people in Wawa paying half a cent a kilowatt hour? No. If you look at their hydro bill and quantify it all in terms of the number of kilowatt hours used and what they're paying, people are paying in excess of 15 cents a kilowatt hour. That's what it works out to. Imagine that; they're paying 30 times what it costs to produce the electricity, and this government says that's good.

1710

The private company didn't do anything ingenious to create this power. It was a natural resource of Ontario. It's something that belongs to all the people of Ontario. But this government has now privatized it and deregulated it and they're allowing somebody to put the screws to the people of Wawa, to charge them 30 times what it costs to produce that electricity.

What does that mean for Wawa? Well, Dubreuil Forest Products used to employ about 450 people. Now, with the latest layoffs, it's down to about 150. It's killed 300 jobs. The gold mine in Wawa can't afford to pay their hydro bill. They are looking at shutting down—a couple of hundred more jobs. There are two supermarkets in Wawa; one of them is shutting down. They can't afford to pay their hydro bill. And so it goes. Across Ontario we are seeing more and more businesses, more and more industries simply saying, "We have to. We can't afford to pay these hydro bills."

The government is going to say, "Oh, but there's the increasing value of the Canadian dollar and that's a problem." Speaker, I invite the government members to read your friend Eric Reguly's article in the *Globe and Mail*. He says, "You can't do anything about the devaluation of the American dollar but you could certainly do something about hydro prices. You could certainly do something about the supply of hydroelectricity, namely, don't privatize it, don't deregulate it."

Is this bill going to do anything about that? Nothing. It won't do one single thing, but it will attempt to paper over the problem. In the short term, in the run-up to an election campaign, it will attempt to convince people that something is being done. I want people to understand that this will not do anything about hydro bills that have doubled. This will not do anything about pulp mills, paper mills, sawmills, mining operations, steel-making operations and other operations that are shutting down or laying people off. It won't do anything about DaimlerChrysler looking at projected electricity prices and saying, "No, we're not going to build a new assembly plant in Windsor. The electricity is too expensive." This won't do anything about that.

This is really sort of a second stage. Earlier last fall, November 11, Remembrance Day, the government made their announcement that they're going to establish rate caps. The government wants to pretend that that's going to look after the problem. Well, that sad, sorry game has been tried before, in Alberta, by Ralph Klein. After deregulating electricity in Alberta and trying to force many of the publicly owned utilities there to privatize and sell off—for example, Calgary, Edmonton, Medicine Hat—after that deregulation-privatization strategy resulted in hydro prices going through the roof, in a run-up to an election, what does Klein do? He sends out a rebate cheque. Some might say it's a bribe, but I wouldn't say that. Then he puts in place a temporary rate cap and says to people, "This is going to solve the problem." Eight months after the election, what happened? Off come the rate caps, and hydro bills in Alberta are higher than ever;

so high in rural Alberta in fact that they have now had to create a review to find out why hydro prices are so high.

There's no mystery here. If you take something that previously was provided at cost—that means, whatever it costs to produce the hydro electricity, that is what it's sold to people for—and then you introduce a profit-taker over here, a fee-taker over there and a commission-taker over there, and they all want to line their pockets with hard-working people's money—yes, the hydro bill's going to go up.

I invite people across Ontario, take out your hydro bill and look at all the 10 or 11 new charges there. The people that are responsible for many of these new charges don't generate electricity, they don't transmit electricity, they don't distribute electricity. They don't do anything except to try to take money out of your pocket for a fee, a commission or a profit. They do nothing but they want to get into your pocket. The Conservatives and the Liberals say that's OK. The Conservatives and the Liberals think that's the way to go. It is costing us jobs, it is costing us the potential of jobs in the future and it is costing people far too much money.

But still, Conservatives want to try to finesse this through the next election. Liberals hope the issue sort of disappears in the next election, because they don't want to talk about it either. Why don't they want to talk about it? I want to read the Liberal position. I just happen to have a copy of a Liberal fundraising letter. This is an "Energy sector reception for Dalton McGuinty." This is a letter that went out in early 2001, sent to a lot of the corporate powers that be on Bay St. It basically says:

"Dear corporate president:

"We are writing to invite you to a reception to meet Dalton McGuinty, leader of the official opposition."

Then it goes on to say:

"Throughout Ontario's electricity restructuring process, Dalton and the Ontario Liberals have been consistent supporters of the move to an open electricity market in Ontario."

What does that mean? That means Liberals, just like Conservatives, believe in this privatization-deregulation fiasco.

I want to speak just for a minute about some of the incredible propaganda that's been put out over the last three or four years. I had an opportunity to read the Ontario Hydro report of 1995. I'd like all the Conservative members to read it, because it was signed by your bagman, your golfing buddy, Bill Farlinger. Bill Farlinger is appointed to be the chair of the Ontario Hydro board in November 1995. The year is basically over, all of the cost control measures have been put in place etc. He is appointed at the end and he gets to sign the Ontario Hydro annual report. What does he say in that 1995 annual report that comes out early in 1996? What he says is that in fact Ontario Hydro has substantially reduced its costs, it's making money, it has been able to pay down a substantial amount of its debts. He points out that in the beginning of 1996 Ontario Hydro's long-term debt stands at \$31.4 billion.

The government today tells us that the hydro system's debt stands at \$38 billion. They tell us that's an improvement. I want the people of Ontario to ask the question, what have they gotten for \$6.5 billion more in debt? Did they get a new generating station somewhere? Can't find any. Did they get a new transmission line somewhere, an upgraded transmission line? Can't find any of those. Did they get some new technology that was worth \$6.5 billion? Can't find any of that either. Almost all of that's been sold off.

I want the Conservative members, during the election campaign, to go out there and tell people how your strategy of privatizing and deregulating our hydro has added \$6.5 billion in debt and the people of Ontario have nothing to show for it—nothing.

1720

I can tell you how you can rack up that kind of debt in a hurry. Let me just talk about Eleanor Clitheroe, because she exemplifies how you can rack up a whole lot of Hydro debt and a whole lot of costs on people's hydro bills in a hurry.

When the Conservatives said, "Privatize and de-regulate," they took Ontario Hydro, split it up into Ontario Power Generation, Hydro One, the Electrical Safety Authority and then the Ontario Electricity Financial Corp. But they told OPG and Hydro One, "You behave like a private corporation. You behave like those big dogs out there on Bay Street. You raise your salary. You go for the big fat expense account. You go for the big severance allowance and the car allowance."

What did Eleanor Clitheroe do? When she worked for an Ontario publicly owned, not-for-profit corporation, she was paid about \$500,000 a year. As soon as she was told, "Behave like a private corporation," what did she want for pay? She wanted \$2.2 million a year in salary and bonuses—not bad money. Not a bad job, I guess, if you can find it. But that wasn't the end. If she decided to leave or if she was fired from Hydro One, she wanted a \$6-million severance allowance. She wanted what amounted to a \$1-million-a-year retirement pension and she wanted a \$173,000 car allowance. I've been going around the province for a year and a half trying to find a car that costs \$173,000 a year. That's some car. But that's what the Conservatives set up for her. And she wanted a \$330,000 limousine allowance. I don't think anyone can figure out why you need a \$173,000 car allowance and then a \$330,000 limousine allowance.

All of that gets added to people's hydro bills. That's why people's hydro bills go through the roof: because Eleanor Clitheroe, like the profit takers, the fee takers and the commission takers, wanted to line her pockets. Because the Conservatives said, "It's OK. Behave like those big dogs on Bay Street."

I'm sorry, I forgot the yacht. Eleanor also wanted to have a yacht paid for and provided at public expense.

I say to people across Ontario, this is what hydro privatization and deregulation does. It no longer becomes a matter of having an affordable service for people, an affordable service that people need every day. It

becomes, "How much can the executives expand their pay? How much can the profit takers, the fee takers and the commission takers get into your pocket?"

There is a fundamental reason why hydro privatization and deregulation won't work, and it's this. The Conservatives and the Liberals try to say, "This is like any other market. This is like selling cars." Well, it's not like selling cars. If tomorrow Chrysler, Ford, General Motors, Honda, Toyota and Nissan all tripled the price of cars, you and I wouldn't be captive consumers. We wouldn't have to go out and pay three times the price for a car. Why? We could keep the old car that we've got and fix it up. We could buy a second-hand car. We could agree to car pool or maybe we could just say, "I'll take public transit or I'll walk." But we wouldn't be captive consumers.

In electricity, if you do what Enron did in California—oh, by the way, this government spent a lot of time talking to Enron. They invited those crooks from Enron, those swindlers from Enron to come to Ontario and help them design this hydroelectricity market. But when you privatize Hydro and you put a company like Enron in control, they have captive consumers. The reality of electricity is that you need it every day, and we all need it. And you can't store it. You can't find a cupboard somewhere and put some away for a rainy day. Whatever the price that's being charged that day is, that's what you have to pay.

In California, Enron and their co-conspirators were responsible not for hydro prices going up by five times, 10 times, not even 20 times, but 40 times, and people and industry were forced to pay it. That's why this doesn't work. You're putting an essential service that people need every day, that can't be stored, that we all need, in the hands of a profit-driven corporation that has every incentive to do what Enron did in California—manipulate the market, create an artificial electricity shortage and then drive the price through the roof. That's what we've seen in Ontario.

Just an example of how absurd this has been: the people of Ontario used to own four hydro plants on the Mississagi River, halfway between Sault Ste Marie and Sudbury. These were very efficient hydro plants. Again, they generate electricity at about half a cent a kilowatt hour. This low-cost electricity should be provided to the people of Ontario on that kind of basis. But what did this government do? This is a fascinating story. More people have to find out about this story.

You'll remember that a year and five months ago there was a Conservative leadership contest, and Ernie Eves wanted to become the leader of the Conservative Party and Premier of Ontario. So this company that's now big in the private hydro market, Brascan—Brascan has a number of subsidiaries—contributed in excess of \$140,000 to Mr Eves's campaign to become leader of the Conservative Party. They contributed \$140,000 in January and February. Mr Eves becomes leader of the Conservative Party in March and then shortly after becomes Premier of Ontario.

What happens shortly after he becomes leader of the Conservative Party and Premier of Ontario? The four hydro generating stations on the Mississagi River are sold to those Brascan companies at a fraction of their worth, at a minor fraction of what it would cost to build those hydro dams and those hydro generators anew. Then, on May 1, the electricity market opens; that is, there's no longer a regulated price and corporations like Brascan can charge whatever they want.

We get into the hot months of July, August and September, and what does Brascan do? Brascan makes \$8.8 million profit on hydro dams that they paid a pittance for just four months earlier. That's not a bad investment. You give \$150,000 to Ernie Eves in January and February, and then in July, August and September you get to make \$8.8 million profit on something that used to belong to the people of Ontario. You get to sock it to the people and charge them not 10 cents a kilowatt hour, not 20 cents a kilowatt hour but 40 and 50 and 60 cents a kilowatt hour for power that used to be theirs. That's how badly people are being ripped off in this scenario.

By the way, the environment be damned in this process. Brascan was making so much money that they literally emptied the lake, they literally opened the lake and drained it because, after all, they could make lots of money in terms of privatized, deregulated hydro. The environment be damned, consumers be damned, a sense of economic justice for the people of Ontario be damned. In a privatized, deregulated hydro market the only thing that matters is, "How much money can we make?" and that's exactly what's been going on. The pitiful events, the terrible events on the Mississagi illustrate that to a T.

The government has gotten itself into such an electricity shortage problem that this summer they had to go out and secure temporary generation for \$100 million. As I said earlier, it works out to a quarter-million dollars a megawatt, and this government thinks that's a good deal. I suppose if you were paying a quarter-million dollars a megawatt and it was power that was going to be there for 40 or 50 years, that might be good, but this power is only going to be there, as we understand it, for six, maybe 18 months. This is completely temporary, but this government says, "That's a good deal."

1730

How many people do you know in this province who could afford to pay a quarter of a million dollars for a megawatt of power? Could the steel mills in Hamilton? Could the paper mills in Kenora, Fort Frances, Dryden, Thunder Bay, Terrace Bay, Marathon, Sault Ste Marie, Kapuskasing, Iroquois Falls, Smooth Rock Falls and Espanola afford to pay? No. Could the mines and smelters and refinery in Sudbury afford to pay that? No. How about the smelter and refinery and mines in Timmins? No. This is completely unaffordable. This is the kind of hydro pricing that will certainly kill jobs, yet this government now says, "This is a good deal." This illustrates how completely bankrupt the whole scheme of hydro privatization and deregulation really is.

That is but the tip of the iceberg, because what's really involved here is that you have to interpret hydro privatization and deregulation in terms of a number of the trade agreements that Conservative and Liberal governments in Ottawa have signed. What the NAFTA agreement essentially says is that once you move down this road of privatization and deregulation, once you say that hydroelectricity is a privatized commodity, companies can sell it wherever they can get the highest price. Even that electricity that's produced on the Mississagi River is no longer our electricity. Even that electricity that's produced at the Sir Adam Beck stations on the Niagara River is no longer necessarily our electricity.

If New York City is prepared to pay double for that electricity, then it's their electricity, and if the steel mills in Hamilton want that electricity, they would have to pay double too. If the auto plants in Windsor or St Thomas or Bramalea or Oshawa want that electricity, they would have to pay double too. That is the further piece of ugly business that hasn't reared its awful head yet, but it's fully, additionally part of this package. Even the electricity we produce in Ontario, in a completely privatized and deregulated market, is no longer our electricity. It belongs to whoever is prepared to bid the highest for that electricity. If somebody in Baltimore or Washington or New Jersey or New York or Boston or Chicago or Detroit is prepared to pay double or triple, then that becomes the prevailing price in Ontario.

I actually had a chance to talk at length with some of the Brascan executives in Sault Ste Marie. I said to them, "What is your corporate strategy in this scheme of hydro privatization and deregulation that the Conservatives and Liberals think so highly of?" The head of the corporation—well, he was head of the corporation then; he's no longer the head now—was very open with me. He said, "We have already started an application to put a transmission cable under the St Marys River and transmit much of this electricity down to the Chicago-Milwaukee corridor. If you look at the average price of electricity, the average price in that corridor is about 40% or 50% higher than the prevailing average price in Ontario, so we would like to sell as much electricity into that market as we can." Then I said to him, "Once you get that cable under the river and you can transmit all your electricity down there and sell it for 40% or 50% more and sell it in American dollars, what happens to the consumers in the Sault Ste Marie area? What happens to the citizens of Sault Ste Marie? What happens to Algoma Steel? What happens to all those people who live along the north shore of Lake Huron and Georgian Bay and the people of Wawa?" He was very blunt. He said, "Well, we're not going to charge less for the electricity in Ontario. As soon as we can establish a price that's 40% or 50% higher in the Milwaukee-Chicago corridor, then that's what everybody in Ontario will have to pay—40% or 50% more." And I said, "Won't that kill jobs at Dubreuil Forest Products, for example? Won't that make it harder for Algoma Steel to stay in business? Won't that make it harder for consumers in the Sault Ste Marie area?" He

looked at me and said, "Well, that's not our problem. In a privatized, deregulated market, our only issue is: how much money can we make? How high can we get the price and how much money can we make? If Algoma Steel goes out of business and 4,000 people lose their jobs—not our problem. If Dubreuil Forest Products goes out of business and 400 people lose their jobs—not our problem. If Sault Ste Marie loses the fundamental building block of its economy—not our problem."

They're only interested in selling the electricity for the highest price possible, and if that means moving into Chicago and Milwaukee, that's completely and totally what they're prepared to do. People across this province need to know that's what happens in the further iteration of Hydro privatization and deregulation. That won't happen overnight. But if this government gets an opportunity to continue down this road with the support of the Liberals, that is certainly already in the cards. That is certainly already on the card table.

Now there are some other issues that I want to address—and it's not just me who is saying this. I've had the opportunity to meet with a number of people who've worked in the electricity industry in Ontario, both from the private side—that is, they have worked on the financial side as investment bankers or accountants—and people who have been engineers, for example, chief of the nuclear division or chief of electricity production for what was Ontario Hydro. They sent me a paper. They're very clear about their concerns.

They said, "Unless the province has firm control of its electricity supply sector, we may be unable to fend off unwelcome pressure by US energy interests, a serious threat to our electrical energy independence and to the price advantage that" Ontario "now enjoys with respect to all of our neighbouring US states."

They're very clear that's at risk. They raise the further point—and my Liberal colleagues should listen to this—"We are greatly concerned that the current US Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade initiative to get General Agreement on Trade Services (GATS) approval of a common North American deregulated energy market is the tip of the iceberg on a series of US initiatives to gain control of our electrical energy resources."

Guess what? Liberal cabinet ministers in Ottawa are all too willing to talk to US energy interests about giving them greater control over Canada and Ontario's electricity supply, just as Mr McGuinty said he is a consistent supporter of the move to a deregulated, privatized electricity system.

So the more you go down this road, the worse it gets: the more we lose our electricity independence, the more the price of our electricity and we lose the cost-of-electricity advantage that has been a fundamental underpinning of Ontario's industry and jobs. That's where this is headed.

As I said, Conservatives don't want this to be an issue in the upcoming election. That is why they're doing everything possible to bring in temporary rate caps. That

is why they've presented this current piece of legislation, once again, to try to paper over the problem. That's why Liberals want this issue to disappear too. Liberals want to go through the campaign pretending that Hydro privatization and deregulation isn't an issue.

I've got news for both of them. New Democrats are going to ensure that every citizen knows that this is a critical issue for Ontario consumers, Ontario industry, Ontario jobs and Ontario's environment.

I want to spend just a few minutes talking about the environment. When this government was elected in 1995 and immediately started down the almost religious road of Hydro privatization and deregulation, one of the first things they killed was an energy conservation and energy efficiency strategy that was already being built here in Ontario.

1740

There was the green communities program, where a number of communities across this province were bringing together the carpenters, gas fitters, electricians and roofers in the community, and they were doing energy audits on their public buildings and on individual residences. They were giving people estimates of how much it would cost to make their homes, their apartment buildings, the schools, the community centres and the hospitals more energy efficient. Many people were taking up the green communities strategy. They were actually taking steps to make their homes more energy efficient. They were actually taking steps to lower their use of electricity, heating oil and natural gas. Then, with the money they'd save on their hydro bill or their heating bill, they could pay off the loan that allowed those energy retrofits to take place, and further down the road, after the loan was paid off, they would be paying less to heat and light their homes.

What did the Conservatives do? They killed that strategy.

In 1993, people at Ontario Hydro came before a legislative committee and outlined a strategy whereby we could reduce our consumption of electricity in the province as a whole by over 5,000 megawatts. Imagine that. That's the equivalent of a couple of Darlington's. Darlington cost \$15 billion to build. Imagine being able to introduce energy efficiency like that. You wouldn't use as much, so you wouldn't have to construct two Darlington's. You wouldn't have to have those coal-burning plants belching smoke and smog and CO₂ every day. You wouldn't have to have some of the other environmental degradation we've seen.

But what did the Conservatives do? They killed the energy conservation and energy efficiency strategies. Why? Well, if you're wining and dining Enron and companies like Enron to begin to provide hydroelectricity, Enron is not interested in electricity conservation. Enron is not interested in electricity efficiency or energy efficiency. Enron is interested in driving up the price as high as they can and then selling as much power as they can, because that's how they can make the most money.

This government now wants to talk about energy efficiency and energy conservation, but it's the very government that killed the energy conservation and energy efficiency strategies that were already in place. So I say shame on you for trying to hoodwink the people of Ontario yet again. You have not been environmentally responsible. You have not been environmentally enlightened. If anything, you have created a terrible environmental situation.

I want to investigate the so-called energy efficiency incentives they've brought out. They'll tell people, "We'll waive the PST if you go out and buy an energy-efficient fridge." That may make for good public relations and good advertising, but in fact it does next to nothing in terms of providing an incentive for hard-working people who are already having a hard time paying their hydro bills to afford to go out and buy an energy-efficient fridge, air conditioner, washer or dryer. It doesn't do any of those things. The so-called energy efficiency strategies that this government has put together in the last five months are nothing more than another propaganda campaign. It doesn't result in effective energy efficiency at all. It merely allows them to run another government ad. But as we've seen, government ads aren't doing much, other than create more cynicism out there.

I want to use the remaining time to outline for the people of Ontario what we really need to do. I want to tell people, you won't hear this from Liberals and you won't hear this from Conservatives.

Hydro privatization and deregulation have been a disaster virtually everywhere. The Conservatives: Jim Wilson, a former energy minister, used to stand in this Legislature and say, "Oh, California is the model. We ought to follow California. We ought to do, in terms of hydro deregulation and privatization, what they've done in California." Then the lights went out in California and hydro bills went through the roof. The latest estimate of the cost of hydro privatization and deregulation for the California economy, the all-in cost, is \$100 billion. That is what one economist at Stanford University has estimated the cost to be. It's been a disaster there. California is now trying to figure out how they disassemble the last elements of hydro deregulation there.

Then this government used to refer to Great Britain. They used to say, "Well, privatize and deregulate the way they did in Britain." In Britain, the Labour government has had to go in and float a \$4-billion loan to British Energy to keep them afloat so they can continue to produce electricity for consumers in Great Britain. Not only that; they've had to go in and reregulate the market. They've actually had to put in place a new regime of regulation to force down the price so that consumers in Great Britain can afford their hydroelectricity.

They used to speak about New Zealand. New Zealand continues to experience electricity brownouts and blackouts and electricity prices that continue to skyrocket.

Then they used to refer to Alberta, but their hero, Ralph Klein, has had to call a review after the phony

price caps and the phony rebates on the hydro bill were over. After the last election was over, hydro prices in Alberta skyrocketed again, so now they've had to review yet again why Alberta has gone from being a jurisdiction with some of the most affordable hydro prices before deregulation to being one that now has, like Ontario, some of the highest electricity prices after deregulation.

Montana is a bit like Wawa. Montana is a state that is more or less in the Rocky Mountains, so you get these rapid rivers flowing out of the Rocky Mountains through the state of Montana. Before deregulation, Montana had some of the most affordable hydroelectricity prices in the United States. This has been documented on 60 Minutes. In fact, 60 Minutes was so fascinated, they did not one, but two programs illustrating the rip-off that happened in Montana. After they privatized and deregulated, did the price of electricity for Montana consumers double? No. Did it triple? No, it went up four times. People's hydro bills went up four times.

This has been a disaster wherever it's been tried, and yet Conservatives and Liberals want to take the fundamental underpinning of the Ontario economy and turn it over to some of the same corporate crooks, the Enrons that so badly screwed things up in California, that so terribly manipulated people in Montana and continue to manipulate people in Alberta.

This is their energy strategy, their economic strategy for Ontario. I say shame on Conservatives and Liberals for buying into a strategy which will only put money in the pockets of their corporate friends but which will take a great deal of money, great sums of money, from the ordinary consumers of Ontario and undermine our fundamental industries and a fundamental part of our economy.

What do we need to do? First, let us recognize that neither of the jurisdictions immediately to our east and west, Quebec and Manitoba, is going to privatize and deregulate this most essential of services. They recognize that hydroelectricity is something people need every day and we all need it. Their philosophy is that something like electricity, that people need every day and that we all need, like health care for our families and like education for our children, something that is essential, should never be turned over to profit-driven corporations, who have every incentive to manipulate the market and try to drive up the price. We should recognize the wisdom of the philosophy in Manitoba and Quebec. We need to end hydro privatization and deregulation here and now. We need to recognize that the further we go down this trail, the more painful it will become for people in Ontario.

1750

After eight years of telling people in Ontario that the private sector will do it, here is the sad result: there is virtually no new supply of electricity. I can remember the various Ministers of Energy for the Conservatives announcing, "Oh, the Energy is going to build a new generating station in Mississauga. The Energy is going to build another new gas generating station elsewhere in Mississauga. And there's a plant coming on stream here

and a plant coming on stream there." That's not happening. That is simply not happening. That is why we find ourselves in the position where the government has to pay a quarter of a million dollars a megawatt for temporary electricity for this summer.

How do we get out of this? What we need to do is to implement now an across-the-province strategy of energy efficiency and energy conservation. I call it Efficiency Ontario. Let me give you just some practical examples. We should say to people this summer, "We will provide you with a low-interest loan so that you can take the refrigerator in your home that was built before 1994, before the NDP said that refrigerators had to be electrically efficient, and purchase an efficient one." What does that mean? An energy-inefficient refrigerator uses about 900 kilowatt hours of electricity a year. An efficient one uses less than 200. A really efficient one uses less than 100. So let's just take the moderately efficient one that uses 200. You're using three quarters less electricity, one quarter of the electricity you used to use. Multiply that by four million homes in Ontario and add up the result. You can save an awful lot of electricity.

Then we need to look at air conditioners, especially in the greater Toronto area. The reality is that air conditioners—and I'm talking about the air conditioners you might install in your home—that have come on the market in the last two years, many of them are electricity-efficient; those that have been around for about 10 years aren't. Provide people with a low-interest loan so they can replace that old clunker that uses a lot of electricity with one which is electricity-efficient.

Conservatives will say, "How do you get the money?" It's a loan. With the money that people save on their electricity bill from using three quarters less electricity, in three or four years they can pay back the loan, and then whatever else they save on their electricity bill they can put in their pocket. Instead of taking money out of people's pockets to give to the corporate friends of the Conservatives and the Liberals; instead of taking money out of people's pockets on their hydro bill to give to the profit-takers, the fee-takers and the commission-takers; to pay for Eleanor Clitheroe's yacht and her \$173,000 car allowance, bring in electricity efficiency so people can keep it in their own pockets. But it only really works if we implement, once again, a public power system, a publicly owned electricity system that provides electricity at cost. That's how it works.

What do we do beyond that? There are literally thousands of small-scale hydro-potential rivers in this province. I probably have 40 or 50 of them in my own constituency. They will not generate 1,000 megawatts or 500 megawatts. They're not the big, fast-flowing rivers. But some can generate 10 megawatts, five megawatts, 15 megawatts. Many of them are quite close to the existing transmission lines. We should begin to develop those, but we should develop them as part of a publicly owned system so that the very low-cost power they produce, a half-cent a kilowatt hour, inures to the benefit of the people of Ontario.

What do Conservatives and Liberals have in mind? They want to sell the remaining water rights off to their corporate friends. They want to see more Brascans, where it costs half a cent a kilowatt hour to produce the hydro but their corporate friends would sell the electricity for 20 and 30 cents a kilowatt hour, 20 times what it cost to produce.

I say and New Democrats say, keep those water rights under public control. Build those new run-of-the-river turbines on a not-for-profit basis so that the people get to benefit from the true cost of producing that power: half a cent a kilowatt hour or three quarters of a cent a kilowatt hour. That's what must be done.

Finally, we know that there is the potential of wind power. I listened to the so-called commissioner of energy efficiency a while ago. I have to say to him that you've been telling people for eight years to let the private sector do it. The reality is the private sector has done squat. Hydro-Québec already has wind turbines up and

functioning. In Manitoba, under a public power system, they've already completed their wind mapping of the province. They know where it will be most cost-effective, most efficient and most environmentally responsible to build those wind turbine farms. Public power is already doing this.

Your private sector friends haven't done anything yet, and when they do it, if you continue down the road that you're on, they'll want to charge people again an arm and a leg for what is yet another natural resource. I say, shame on you. Those wind resources should be developed on a not-for-profit basis so that the benefit goes to the citizens, the jobs, the industry of Ontario, not your corporate friends. That's public power, and it's time we had public power.

The Acting Speaker: It being almost 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45 this evening.

The House adjourned at 1757.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 16 June 2003

Lundi 16 juin 2003

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Greffier
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 16 June 2003

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 16 juin 2003

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THE RIGHT CHOICES FOR EQUITY IN EDUCATION ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LES BONS CHOIX POUR L'ÉQUITÉ EN MATIÈRE D'ÉDUCATION (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 12, 2003, on the motion for second reading of Bill 53, An Act respecting the equity in education tax credit / Projet de loi 53, Loi concernant le crédit d'impôt pour l'équité en matière d'éducation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr David Christopherson): It's my understanding that the member for Trinity-Spadina is in the midst of the leadoff debate for the third party. Please continue.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): It is a pleasure again to have the floor to speak on An Act respecting the equity in education tax credit. It is a pleasure to have 30 minutes to beat up on the Conservatives. It's something that is good to do; it makes me feel good to do it.

I am certain there are people watching today who love to watch a member beat up on the Conservatives in the way they would like to beat you up if they had the opportunity to be here. That's what I think.

I'm sure there are loads of those people out there saying, "How do I get in this place to have the opportunity to attack the Tories day in and day out?" They have to live vicariously through some of the members on this side who have the opportunity from time to time to do that and enjoy it at the same time.

I do like it because today, June 16, we are on live in this political forum at 6:45, debating An Act respecting the equity in education tax credit. We do not have today, because it's not his night to be here, the Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation, who is the original author of this bill. He was here when I was debating Thursday night. I've got to say to you he is very proud of the initiative he took, which he handed over to the now-Minister of Finance and then-Minister of Education, who

clearly was unhappy at the time, that I could discern, but you wouldn't notice it.

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): It's only hearsay.

Mr Marchese: It's only hearsay; you're quite right.

You wouldn't notice it, because the now-Minister of Finance quite comfortably and happily took on the issue of the tax credit and has continued with the work that Monsieur Flaherty introduced. So they seem like a pair of happy people. They sit beside each other, quite happy to support the initiative, one and the other.

1850

But I've got to tell you good folks watching that there's nothing that has anything to do with equity when we're talking about giving your tax money away to private schools that neither need nor want your help. There are a great many private schools such as Upper Canada College, the example I use so very often, where the tuition fees are now \$16,000 a year. I'm not quite sure I understand the meaning of Monsieur Flaherty, when he talks about equity, or Madame Ecker, when she talks about An Act respecting the equity in education tax credit. What equity do they bestow onto the public by giving away your money to parents who send their kids to places like Upper Canada College, where the tuition fee, just to go to school, is 16,000 bucks?

I'm not quite sure what the minister has in mind. It's possible that he, in his omnipotence, has a greater facility and skill in understanding things than the rest of us, but I do not see the connection between giving my money—your money—away to rich folks who send their kids to Upper Canada College at \$16,000 a pop. I don't see it. What equity does it give to that child who is subsidized by their parents, and who now is subsidized by me, when the real help that is needed is not for that young person going to Upper Canada College. The real help that's needed is in our downtown core, where we have inner-city needs in Toronto, as we would in Hamilton, as we would in Windsor, as we would in any city in Ontario.

Where equity is desperately needed is where kids come from poor homes and cannot break the cycle of poverty, and where kids come from troubled homes where there might be sexual abuse, where there might be alcohol abuse, where there might be psychological abuse. Those are the kids who desperately need our help, who desperately need a compensatory educational system to deal with the problems and troubles they face day in and day out. I just don't see, for the life of me, a kid going to Upper Canada College, where the parents can afford to

pay 16,000 bucks, who would need my taxpayer's money and your taxpayer's money to fund them to achieve what? Equity? Because they choose to send their children to private schools, you and I have to pay for that choice?

Monsieur Flaherty and Madame Ecker have no problem saying, "Well, if they choose to send them wherever they send them, we have a duty and a responsibility to treat them equitably." I'm sorry, Madame Ecker and Monsieur Flaherty, but the public doesn't agree with you. The public does not believe that rich people should be subsidized to send their children to a very, very private school, where the intent of those who have money is not to mix their kids in our public system but to get them as far as they can from the public system and put them in a private system where they are mixing and mingling with other kids whose parents are rich like them. That's the point of a private school. That's the point of private. It's not choice; it's the point of private. They send them to a private school because they can, because they don't need my money and they don't want my money. But you, Flaherty, and you, Ecker, have chosen to send our money away to individuals who neither need nor want our money.

Taxpayers, you ought to be seriously worried about what this government is doing. It's taking \$120 million away from last year and this year to subsidize, by and large, non-denominational schools and, yes, denominational schools, but the bulk of your money is going to non-denominational schools. Is that really what you wanted this government to do: take \$120 million from last year and this year out of our pockets to give away just like that, with no accountability whatsoever? Taxpayers, there is no accountability here.

I read to you last week, on Thursday, that Madame Ecker says, "I believe that one of the most important tasks of any government is to provide a strong public education system for our children.... We have set higher standards through more rigorous curriculum, and we have implemented standardized testing so we can ensure our children are learning what they need to achieve their potential to succeed. We've created report cards that parents can understand. We've established standards for the professional development and performance appraisal of teachers in the classroom."

They don't have standards for the professional development of teachers in the private system. Why not? If they can take, so far, \$120 million of our money, why would we not make those private school teachers as accountable as we do our public school teachers? Why not? They receive public dollars. Do you expect any less? We should give our money away without any accountability. That's how this government sees it. How do you explain that? Surely, those of you watching who like the Conservative Party must be calling these people and asking, "Why are you doing that?"

Taxpayers and citizens, they also require that we have standardized testing for our students, but the children in the private system don't have to write standardized tests. All they require, because of the push by critics and other

parents, is that private schools tell parents what assessment tools they're using. The only measure of accountability is that parents be told that some assessment is going on. But there's no requirement that the assessments we use in the public system be the same, and ought to be the same, if you get public dollars from the private system. Why not?

How can you, Ecker and Flaherty, give away our money and say, "We've introduced tough standards for the public system, but for the private system we don't have to do that"? Why? Because rich private little boys and girls are better than the rest of us? They don't need to be surveyed, they don't need to be assessed, tested provincially like the others? Why? Is it that rich people are able to transcend the laws or the regular rules that apply to the rest of us? But they're entitled under Madame Ecker's rules to get my money and yours.

Something isn't right. Something is profoundly, politically stupid when governments can take your money out of your pocket and give it away to the rich. Just like they did with the income tax cuts they made to individuals and corporations, just like the Americans have done under Reagan and are now doing under Bush, taking trillions of dollars out of their government pockets in America to be able to deal with issues of social policy as it relates to their 270 million bucks, they're taking billions and billions of dollars away, where 20% of the American public get 70% of the billions, if not close to a trillion, in tax cuts—20%.

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We know there are 25 million in America who do not have any health insurance whatsoever. They proudly, here, argue in the same way that giving our tax money to the rich is OK because they pay for themselves. No, they don't. We pay for it. We, the little people, the ordinary folk, pay for that. The rich people take the money the Tories give them and run. The federal Liberals did the same at the national level, where they gave \$100 billion away in income tax cuts. We all know that those who benefit are the wealthy, not the little guys at the bottom. You, taxpayers, are giving away your money. You don't even know where it's going, but it's going out of here in buckets every day.

Next year, Joe Spina is going to be happy to give away another \$120 million. The Minister of Labour, the following year, will be happy to give away another \$120 million.

Hon Brad Clark (Minister of Labour): The Minister of Labour?

Mr Marchese: Are you not the Minister of Labour? The Minister of Labour, last year, gave away \$60 million; this year he's giving away \$60 million; next year he's going to give away another \$60 million if he gets elected—God bless, I hope not—and the year after another \$60 million going out of our pockets. Our pockets. They're just willing year after year to give away yet another \$60 million at a time. The Minister of Labour will entertain us with his comments soon, so we can hear from him and his ability to, with great discernment,

explain to you, taxpayers, why he's giving away your money. I look forward to his two minutes, if not more.

What can I say? We have a public system that's starving for money. Dr Rozanski said we need to restore two billion bucks.

Mr Beaubien: He's leaving, by the way. He's gone.

Mr Marchese: He's leaving, yes. God bless him too.

He said, when he did his report, we are \$2 billion short. Mr Eves still claims that he rolled more money into our public system than any other government. Most members nod. Ministers and others nod like penguins. They will nod at anything the Premier will tell them. Dr Rozanski told them they were \$2 billion short. If he said that we're \$2 billion short, you cannot say, Norm, that you gave more money, when Dr Rozanski said we have to put it back.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: Where did it go?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): It's going to increased services for our students, services that weren't there before.

Mr Marchese: Yes. Minister Sterling, the Attorney General, says it's going to services somewhere, but we're not seeing it. Here's what you did, Norm. Let me explain. You will have an opportunity to—

Hon Mr Sterling: Don't patronize me now.

Mr Marchese: No, no, no. I wouldn't want to do that. You put \$325 million or so—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Brad, hold on.

—some \$320 million or so for the line item that goes into negotiations with teachers and boards. You may or may not know—I suspect you don't; not to patronize you or anything—the Ontario Public School Trustees' Association says that line item that you responded to that Rozanski told you was underfunded—you guys gave \$320 million; the public school trustees' association, says on that line item you're \$900 million short. You put \$300 million; you're still short. That's fine.

But you put some money back, so you feel good and you're able to tell the public, "Oh God, we did that. Then we put \$225 million in special ed," because Rozanski told you—not because it's underfunded or anything. No, no, no, no. Not because you guys cut back all these years. No, no, no. It's just that Rozanski said you should put some money back and so you did. You also put in some money for transportation, all of which amounts to, more or less, \$600 and some-odd million.

Then you made some other announcement to deal with at-risk students, \$50 million or so just about a month ago, when you knew students were failing, when you collapsed grade 13 and now we have four years of high school and not five, and you introduced a new curriculum to make it tougher, as you say, so many students collapsed now into two streams and not three and would suffer because of those curriculum changes. You knew four years ago you would have those problems. Under pressure—and from Rozanski—you said, "We'd better

put in some money to deal with students at risk," when we knew for so long that students were at risk, and you did nothing. So what you have not put in—according to Hugh Mackenzie, an economist that you all deride—is that we are short by \$1.4 billion this year of the money that should be refunded to the school system that you robbed for so many years.

You do not deal with the issue of inflation at all. You do not deal with the issue of benchmarks that have been deliberately set low since 1997. So you are deliberately starving a system desperate for money, including keeping supervisors in Toronto, Hamilton and Ottawa when we do not need to keep those supervisors in place. They are political placements. They are designed to keep school boards silent because they've criticized you for too long because of the underfunding. You've decided to keep them there, even though Rozanski told you that the boards could deal with many of their problems by doing but one of those recommendations: giving each board across Ontario 5% of the foundation grant so they would have the flexibility to respond to their own needs. Implementing just one of those recommendations would free up the Toronto, Ottawa and Hamilton boards of politically appointed supervisors, who are Tories all, designed to stay there to keep boards silent.

Hon Mr Clark: Hogwash.

Mr Marchese: Just the one recommendation, Brad, that you are not aware of. I can tell you're not aware of it, and you ought to be, because I've just given it to you. Just that one recommendation—should you decide to be listening, and you probably have because you said "Hogwash" to what I'm saying—would give the Toronto board alone—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: No, listen to me, Brad. Forget the book. You can't read while I'm speaking.

The Toronto board alone would have \$125 million. With that money, Brad, we wouldn't need Christie, who was the former campaign manager of Chris Stockwell, to be there, sucking taxpayers' money out of our pockets and bleeding the system and letting go people that we desperately need—just that one recommendation. That one recommendation will prevent Christie, the Conservative appointment and former Conservative city councillor, from taking away people we desperately need to stay in our schools. And who are threatened by the Christie-Tory cuts at the Toronto board? That highly paid now-servant of the Conservative government is going to let go educational assistants and fire more vice-principals, lunchroom supervisors and caretakers. These are the eyes and ears of school safety, and for the last seven years you've been taking them out. Christie plans to cut some more.

These are the eyes and ears of school safety. In my questions to the minister, she refuses to acknowledge that these people are very important, given the current rash of incidents that we've been experiencing in some of our schools where so many kids are threatened by intruders, and threatened in a way that only a parent could under-

stand. But even non-parents would feel it, when kids are approached by intruders, predators who could, just like that, take some kid away.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): We don't have it that bad up in our riding.

Mr Marchese: We have them everywhere, Bill. These people are everywhere. But if we had those caretakers back, and lunchroom supervisors, ed assistants and vice-principals and principals, in some cases, there would be yet more eyes to keep an eye on who's coming in and who's going out. One parent wrote to me—

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Mr Murdoch: How much money would you put back in?

Mr Marchese: I will tell you how much we would put in, Bill from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. What matters is what you took out and what you're unwilling to put in. Bill, that's what matters. Rozanski has told us what you should be putting in, and you are unwilling to put money back.

One parent wrote to me, saying—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Hold on, Bill. Quiet down. Listen to this.

Sarah D. wrote to thank me for the remarks I make in this House from time to time. "The recent spate of attempted child abductions have made me increasingly aware of these cuts in staffing at my children's school. With a reduced number of assistants, custodial staff and lunchroom and schoolyard supervisors, I am no longer confident that there are enough adults at the school to keep the children safe from this very real threat," Bill.

"But I do not want a police presence at our schools. I want to see staff who are part of our school and greater community and who therefore know who belongs in our school and who may pose a threat. We had such a community but it has been relentlessly eroded in the past several years." It's not just me saying that, Bill. It's regular people out there: parents in the schools.

"Please continue to urge the government to return funding to our schools," and in parentheses she says, "(and, no, Mr Eves, you haven't done so, not in Toronto at any rate). Our children deserve a safe environment in which to learn and to thrive, and we parents deserve the peace of mind of knowing that our schools are providing our children with what they need."

You've taken millions out of our educational system. We now have community use of schools that has dropped to levels never seen before. Girls Scouts, Boy Scouts, and activities such as basketball and other games that people play in our schools, no longer can afford the rates schools are charging because of the downloading. Because of the stealing of money from school boards, which you now control, our schools are unable to rent out space at rates that are affordable to just ordinary people out there who desperately need to use our gyms.

We have less money for English-as-a-second programs. We have had cuts in educational assistants unlike we've ever seen before, cuts in caretakers unlike we've

ever seen before, cuts in social workers, cuts to the youth counsellors we have in Toronto who keep kids in, so they don't drop out of school and cause harm to themselves and to society. The social and economic costs to us are not measurable, Bill. They're not.

Christie, your instrument fired all of the youth counsellors who deal with students at risk. These are the people we need to hold in our system and not let them go. Christie said, "Well, it's not classroom-related so we can let them go." This is your buddy, Chris's buddy, a Tory like you taking essential people and programs out of our educational system. You understand, Bill. You did this, not me. You did it.

It's not a question of how much you would put back; it's what you've taken out and the social and economic costs that has.

Mr Murdoch: Were you here in 1990?

Mr Marchese: I was here, Bill.

Mr Murdoch: —all that money you wasted.

Mr Marchese: Oh, the money you waste. Bill Murdoch, my good buddy since 1990, the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, yapping away like a little puppy at the other end, is saying, "What did you do in 1990?" I'm telling you, taxpayers, that if you'd had Bill, the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, and others of his ilk in government in 1990, you would not recognize this province. Some of you don't recognize this province today, with a good economy. Do you think you would have recognized Ontario if the Tories had been in government in 1991-93?

Bill laughs. The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound laughs. He laughs heartily. They cut our health care system unrecognizably. This is the government that gave you Walkerton, courtesy of the Conservative government. That's the kind of environment and the legacy they left you. This is the government that's giving you a hydro legacy where when the Tories were here they would say, "Look at the legacy we're leaving our kids with, a debt," and today, \$1.5 billion, but because some of it is already subsidized by another company, about \$600 million is just put aside as a debt to your children. They don't speak of the debt and the legacy they leave our children—your children and mine. But in our time, did they talk about, "Oh, the legacy the NDP is leaving."

This is the legacy they leave you in good economic times: we have a social service climate that has been eaten to the bone; we have a home care system where people can't get the services they need; we have kids who are autistic, now more than ever, and the minister brags about all she has done. What has she done? Day in and day out we hear cases of autistic students who cannot access services, and the minister just stands up saying, "We're giving more than ever before." I can't believe it. It's painful, really painful.

Mr Murdoch: Fifty billion dollars of debt.

Mr Marchese: Billy, Billy, I'm telling you, it's painful. And it isn't just painful to me, who can see these things, but the public sees it, Billy, the public sees right through you. I don't know how you're going to get elect-

ed this time. I've got to tell you, you've got to continue being a maverick out there, because you're not here. You've got to be a maverick out there and tell the public how much you stand for yourself and not the government. Billy from Bruce-Grey has no problem defending the government in here, but when you read quotes from Billy out there, he's a real maverick, attacking Harris formerly and now Eves. Oh, yeah, Bill, I'm looking forward to the results in Bruce-Grey.

I'm telling you, good citizens, if you think this government is going to get elected and is going to give you a balanced budget, you're dreaming. It's not there. If this government gets re-elected, God forbid, you're going to see that services that weren't devastated before will be non-existent. There is no money. They are bankrupt, you understand. They are bankrupt, and they're giving \$120 million to achieve what they call An Act respecting the equity in education tax credit, taking your money to give it away to the wealthy, money they do not have, money I do not willingly give away, money I know you don't want to give away to rich boys and girls and rich parents who don't want my help—\$120 million. Imagine what we could do with that money.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: They laugh. But it doesn't bother me that they laugh, because my view is that you, discerning public, see it all and see through each and every one of these Tories. My view is that you are tired of this government, you are exhausted with these members. I do not think you'll tolerate them for another term. I do not believe it.

New Democrats oppose this so-called equity bill. It's not equity; it's a disaster for Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Members now have up to two minutes for questions and comments.

Hon Mr Clark: The member has unmitigated gall. I will give him that.

This bill is all about providing equity. In 1999, when I was elected, one of the first issues in my riding that came into my constituency office was a group of parents who were concerned that there was funding for Catholic schools but no funding for Dutch Reformed schools; there was funding for Catholic schools but not for Muslim schools. They saw that as an inequity. I soon found out that they had actually gone so far as to challenge that inequity all the way to the United Nations. The United Nations stated that this definitely was an inequity.

The government was faced with a problem: to rectify that inequity, you could fund all the schools, or you could come up with a more innovative approach. We chose the more innovative approach, one that's more cost-effective, one that's more efficient but is fair, compassionate and equitable.

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What it does is provide tax credits to parents who are putting their children in a Muslim school or a Jewish private school or a Dutch Reformed private school, whatever the case. It's about equity. These are the same parents who are paying upwards of \$7,500 in taxes out of

their pockets annually for the public system to which their children don't go. So an equitable proposal was put together: the tax credit for education.

It's not about funding private schools. The member opposite would loudly and bombastically try to convince the public that we're giving money to private schools; we're not. It's about tax credits for parents whose children are going to these schools.

The interesting thing is that there are members on the opposite side of the House who have clearly supported this, but they've been silenced by the leader of the loyal opposition.

Interjection: Muzzled.

Hon Mr Clark: They've been muzzled; they've been told, "Don't speak out." It's all about equity and fairness.

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): I have a draft submission that the Ontario government made in 1998 to the United Nations. In that submission, they made a compelling argument for not extending full and direct educational funding. It said, "reasonable and objective grounds"—

Interjection.

Ms Di Cocco: It doesn't matter.

Hon Mr Clark: It does matter.

Ms Di Cocco: February 18, 1998. It says this:

"The state party"—which is Ontario—"emphasized that to extend this partial or indirect funding to become full and direct funding" for "private religious schools would undermine the ability of public schools to build social cohesion, tolerance and understanding. When diverse populations separate themselves from the general mix, the public system is the poorer because the opportunities for understanding and accommodating differences are diminished."

It also goes on to say, and this is the government's own paper on this, that this "would result in the disruption and fragmentation of education in Ontario ... The benefits that Ontario receives from a public education system which promotes the values of pluralism, multiculturalism and understanding, would be diminished."

It also says it "would compound the problems of religious coercion and ostracism sometimes faced by minority religious groups."

I go on to (d): "would undermine the goal of universal access to education as many religious schools restrict admission, and staff hiring."

Again it goes on. It says, "would have negative fiscal impacts as there would be a marked increase in the duplication of services and capital costs."

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. The member for Beaches-East—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Take a seat, please. There are a couple of members on the government side who persist, even after I asked nicely for them to please come to order. I'm getting down to the final strokes. I have not yet in two years had to ask anybody to leave the chamber to keep the House in order. I'd love to finish my term without having to do that. Please don't ruin my record. If

I ask you to come to order, please do so. Sorry for the delay, the member for Beaches-East York.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): It's always a pleasure to speak of the speeches of the member for Trinity-Spadina. He's so eloquent and so animated when he speaks.

I tell you, in all of that there was a simple grain of truth, a simple grain that cannot be lost, and that was that a private school is a private school. That's not really all that enormous. Anyone should understand that. A private school is not for the public. A private school is to separate your children from other children. A private school is to send the rich to one school, the Muslims to another school, the Jewish community to a third school, and the Hindus or the Buddhists or whoever—the Dutch Reformed—to yet another and another and another school. It is not to allow our children to be together. It is not to allow our children to know each other. It is not to allow our children what is the glory of this city, of this province and of this country.

At the same time, another truth was said, and that is about the public school system, how it is being hammered. In this city, we do not have trustees—

Interjection.

Mr Prue: I'm always shocked at you, Marilyn.

We do not have trustees who have any authority left. We have a supervisor who has been imposed. That supervisor is doing irreparable harm to the school system of this city, of Hamilton and of Ottawa. They are taking the monies that were meant for our children. They are taking the positions of the people who care for children in the public system, and they are literally throwing it away.

All I can say is that this bill is a disgrace to the memory of Egerton Ryerson and every single public education minister down to this day.

Mr Murdoch: I find it really bizarre in here tonight that we're being lectured about finances from the NDP. That is really bizarre. We had them for five years here. You put us \$50 billion in debt. He mentioned about how you wouldn't know Ontario if we hadn't been in. Yes, we wouldn't have had to go through all the pains that we had to go through after inheriting a government that put us \$50 billion more in debt. That was just total disgrace, and they can come in here tonight and lecture us on this, and then twist the facts around. It's not taking \$120 million out of public education; it's a tax credit. They can't seem to understand that on the other side, I guess. They just don't understand that.

I'm really in support of this bill because I happen to have a private member's bill that said the same thing. I'm pleased that the government has adopted this bill to do this. You talk about your private schools. Yes, but this is about the choice. Parents have a choice. These people do pay taxes, and now they have a choice. It's a tax credit. We're not taking money out. I don't know. I guess trying to get that point across to a party that put us \$50 billion in debt—how would you ever be able to do that? How would you get that across to them?

It is a bizarre time to be lectured by the NDP in this House about finances. They don't understand finances. They put this country almost under. You talk about where we'd be. Well, it's just lucky that we did get elected in 1995 and again in 1999. You said people saw through that; well, I think they agreed with us. We were elected both those years after the disastrous years we had with you and the Liberals.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Trinity-Spadina has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr Marchese: If the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound was in power in 1990, the services that you now see devastated you would not have recognized in 1990-91. There would have been no services for the aged. There would have been very few services for the poor and disadvantaged. There would have been nothing. If they could devastate our economy, and if they could hurt us in good economic times, imagine what they would do, what they would've done, what they would do in bad times.

Poor kids do not have a choice to go to private schools. Rich kids do. Rich parents send kids to private schools.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: I don't know why Bill has a hell of a time understanding that. Rich parents send their kids to private schools.

Yes, Brad, this is about funding private schools. I don't know what you're thinking, but this is what it's about. When you give money to parents to send their kids to private schools, you're supporting private schools. Brad, I'm sorry. I don't know what logic you're using, but one and two are three.

Hon Mr Clark: You're wrong.

Mr Marchese: Count it, Brad.

I'll conclude with this by parent, Cathy Hunt, who says:

"The anticipated elimination of the role of lunchroom supervisors, outdoor education residential visits, the loss of 12 more principals and vice-principals, the suspension of our world-renowned parent centres and programs, further reductions to kindergarten education assistants and near elimination of curriculum instructional leaders are only among the list that leaves my mind reeling in disbelief"—in Toronto.

"The money for these programs is in your pocket, Mr Premier. You simply need to reorganize your priorities. For example: you must not give a tax credit to those who freely choose to attend private schools as they are in an economic position to do so.

"A properly funded public education system provides a safe, vibrant, diverse and educated population which secures a promising future for us all. That is the kind of province/country I choose to live in and want for seven generations into the future."

The Acting Speaker: Just before I go to the next speaker, may I just remind members that the rules do require that other members are referred to by their ridings. I understand, from time to time, the odd first

name adds a human touch to the debate, but consistently is really not the way we do business here. I just bring that to the attention of all members and, with that, call for further debate and recognize the member for Perth-Middlesex.

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Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): I'm pleased to rise in support of The Right Choices for Equity in Education Act, and I just happen to have a copy of it here. It's short. I won't read it, but it's one page. I would have thought the official opposition, members of the Liberal caucus, would have commented on that, because I have heard them on numerous occasions complain, whine, whatever, on bills when there are several different subjects put into one bill. You would think it was a terrible sin and an awful strategy to do that. What I'm suggesting is, they have no hesitation in complaining and whining, but when it comes time and something is done right—and this is done right and is laid out in a very short, concise form—I don't hear a thing about it. I guess they will say it is not their business to compliment when something—but I think it deserves to be said.

In actual fact, the reason it can be short is, it's an amendment to the Income Tax Act that authorizes the scheduling of the implementation of the credit over five years, going from 10% to 50%. I think that is fiscally responsible and implements the kind of credit for people who send their kids to these schools that allows them—we all know they pay their full share of public school taxes and don't send their kids there, so this gives them a little bit of credit for that apparent inequity.

The 2001 throne speech promised parents in Ontario flexibility and choice in the education of their children. I'm pleased to speak out for such choice on behalf of parents who send their children to the six independent schools in my great riding of Perth-Middlesex. I would hasten to add that those are in addition to the Amish and Mennonite schools that are quite prevalent in some parts, particularly in Perth county.

The Right Choices for Equity in Education Act would assist parents who want more choice for their children's education, including the choice to send their children to schools that offer their religion, culture and values.

Bill 53 speaks to many crucial aspects of life in Ontario, but it speaks first and foremost to education as a key priority for the government. We want every child in Ontario to gain the skills and knowledge he or she needs to reach their full potential and achieve personal success. We want every child in Ontario to have equal access to learning and opportunities, no matter where they live in the province. We want to set every child on the path to becoming a self-confident and contributing adult who will help enhance Ontario's prosperity and competitiveness in the years to come.

The Right Choices for Equity in Education Act adds to this commitment. It not only provides accessibility to the kind of education parents believe responds to their and their children's needs, it also provides choice. The equity

in education tax credit supports parental choice in education.

In my riding, parents can choose the great public schools of the Avon Maitland or Thames Valley District School Boards or the Catholic schools run by the Huron-Perth Catholic District School Board or the London District Catholic School Board, or they can choose schools like Brookside Christian School in Listowel, the Stratford Montessori School or the Sebringville Christian School.

For 2002, the tax credit reimbursed 10% of the first \$7,000 of tuition fees for a maximum tax credit of \$700 per child, and 10% of the first \$3,500 of tuition fees for a child of kindergarten age for a maximum tax credit of \$350. If the Legislature approves this bill, the tax credit rate will rise to a maximum of \$1,400 or 20% per child for 2003, 30% for 2004, 40% for 2005 and 50% for the year 2006 and beyond.

The equity in education tax credit does not remove funding from public education. It doesn't remove one red cent from public education. In 1995, when we took office, education funding stood at \$12.9 billion. The government has increased funding for the education system every year. I recall standing in the Legislature, in late 1995, or possibly 1996 or even 1997, and telling the people in my riding that, yes, we would cut funding to schools but it would not include classrooms. So yes, there were savings that had to be made. We said we would not cut one cent from health care, and we didn't, and that we would make savings in non-classroom spending in education. With the enhancements announced in the 2003 budget, education funding for the upcoming 2003-04 school year, including direct provincial transfers and education property taxes stands at a record \$15.3 billion, the highest level of education funding in Ontario's history.

All four boards that serve students in my riding are receiving increased funding next year, despite declining enrolment. The Avon Maitland District School Board will receive funding of \$135 million, an increase of 5.5% over the current year, while enrolment is projected to drop 3.8%. The Thames Valley District School Board will receive \$580 million, an increase of 6.2% more than the current year, while enrolment is expected to fall 1.8%. The Huron-Perth Catholic District School Board will receive \$39.5 million, an increase of 9%, despite a projected decrease in enrolment of 1.9%. The London Catholic District School Board will receive \$158 million, an increase of 6.8%, despite a projected drop in enrolment of 1.3%.

The projected base target for school boards for the 2005-06 school year will be almost \$2 billion, or 14% higher than the 2002-03 education funding level announced in last year's budget. This will enable the education system to focus on what every parent wants: improved learning and higher achievement for students.

The honourable members will recall that our government appointed Dr Mordechai Rozanski to chair the Education Equality Task Force to review the student-

focused funding formula implemented in 1998. The purpose of the student-focused funding is to ensure quality education and equality of opportunity for all students, no matter where they live in the province of Ontario.

As part of his review, Dr Rozanski examined past studies and reports on education funding and researched best practices. He met with education stakeholder groups, conducted public meetings, and the task force accepted submissions by mail and through his Web site. We received his final report last December and the report confirmed that our education funding reforms are sound. It also provided the government with immediate and long-term recommendations on how we could build on the strengths of the student-focused funding formula. Our government considers the Rozanski report an excellent blueprint for the future and we are implementing the report over three years, as Dr Rozanski recommended.

In fact, within three days of receiving the report, our government committed \$610 million in new funding to special education, teachers' salaries and student transportation. We announced \$250 million for teachers, education assistants and other specialists for students with special needs. We announced \$340 million to give school boards the flexibility to reach fair and responsible collective agreements with their teachers and staff for the 2002-03 school year. We announced the board-by-board allocation of \$20 million to enhance the safety and efficiency of the student transportation system.

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Our government responded to other Rozanski recommendations in subsequent weeks. We announced that \$66 million more over three years would be invested in computers for the classroom, up-to-date textbooks and other learning materials. We believe that students need resources like textbooks, computers and other classroom supplies, which will help them reach their full potential in school. We announced the \$50 million GOALS strategy to benefit students who need extra funding in reading, writing and math for the transition to the workplace or to college or university. We also announced that \$75 million more would go toward renovating and replacing existing schools. At the same time, we announced \$74 million to help small rural and northern schools and to address the issue of declining enrolment. Some \$50 million of that total is going to a new rural education strategy. Dr James Downey, former president of the University of Waterloo, has since been appointed to provide the government with recommendations on the development of the \$50-million strategy to help small rural and northern schools.

As a side note, I had the opportunity of meeting with Dr Downey last Thursday morning, and I was impressed with his ideas and his direction on the task that is before him. We look forward to receiving his recommendations so that action can be taken before the start of the next school year.

Dr Downey has met with the stakeholders from across rural and northern Ontario to help him formulate his recommendations. Our government is committed to en-

suring that all students have equal access to a quality education across the province. Dr Downey's report will help us ensure that students in rural and northern schools are provided with the best education opportunities possible.

By the time the Ontario budget was presented on March 27, our government had committed \$875 million more toward Ontario's public education system, based on the recommendations of Dr Rozanski. The budget itself responded to another central recommendation. Our multi-year funding approach commits the government to an increase of almost \$2 billion in the base funding target for education by 2005-06, compared to the funding announcements in last year's budget for the 2002-03 school year. We are on track to meet and exceed Dr Rozanski's recommendation that funding increase by \$1.8 billion over three years. In this upcoming 2003-04 school year, we will invest a record \$15.3 billion in Ontario's education system. This represents an increase of more than \$1 billion, or almost 8% more than the funding announced last May, while enrolment is projected to be 2% lower.

Our government is clearly focusing the education system on where it must be: improved student learning. We remain committed to a province-wide standardized curriculum for every grade, from kindergarten through the elementary grades and into high school, in response to parents' demands for a curriculum that is clear, consistent, and describes in detail what students should learn in each grade.

We also recognize the enormous contribution of Ontario's dedicated and capable teachers, and have implemented several initiatives to support teaching excellence. Among those currently in place is the professional learning program, which requires all certified teachers in Ontario to successfully complete 14 professional learning courses over five-year cycles to maintain their teaching certificate with the Ontario College of Teachers. In April of this year, more than 8,500 prospective teachers wrote the first Ontario teacher qualifying test, and 97% passed. Those who were unsuccessful will be able to increase their skills and will be eligible to rewrite in a future test. Parents want to be assured that teachers have the most up-to-date and skills and knowledge when they stand at the head of the class.

We support parental choice in education with the equity in education tax credit. Parents want the option to choose schools that are appropriate for their children's needs or offer a curriculum they desire. The equity in education tax credit provides our parents with a choice in the education of their children and greater certainty in making decisions about their future. It will increase accountability in the school system and lead to improvements in the quality of our education system and student performance.

Our government's support for equity and choice in education would provide the students with the added tools they need to succeed. The Right Choices for Equity in Education Act reinforces our commitment to help the

students of Ontario achieve success. It recognizes the fact that the right choices for one family or one child may not be the right choices for another, and hopefully makes it easier for parents to make the right choices for their own children.

Before I conclude, I want to ask a rhetorical question of the people listening tonight on the very complex Liberal platform to cancel all the tax credits. Where I come from, if you don't give a credit in taxes and you stop it, then that's a tax increase. If it's not, I want somebody from the Liberal caucus to stand up and explain to me how you're going to take more money out of somebody's pocket and not give them the tax credit.

I'm awfully glad that our party has decided to give the parents of the children in these schools some help, in some cases badly needed help. Because they are so committed to the school of their choice and the influence they can exert in that school as parents, which they cannot in either of the public school systems, they are willing to make the sacrifice. They are willing to contribute their \$7,000 per student for every student in Ontario. They are willing to do that, including their own kids, who will benefit from it. They have asked and are being given that tax incentive to send their children to the school of their choice, which they have an influence over and which they are convinced will give their children the kind of education they want and expect. So I'm wondering how someone is going to take away that tax credit without calling it a tax increase.

If I were going to comment on one other thing, I'm glad that our government has not promised that all 17-year-old and 18-year-old kids—that it will be compulsory, that they will be made to go to one of the public school systems.

I'm awfully proud to be able to stand up tonight and make my comments on The Right Choices for Equity in Education Act. I conclude my remarks now and I welcome questions or comments.

The Acting Speaker: Members now have up to two minutes for questions and comments.

Ms Di Cocco: I have to say that when I listen to the rhetoric and the justification for why we're going to take public dollars and put them into private schools when we cannot afford it, first of all, and second, when it goes against good public policy—96% of our students go to public schools and the dollars aren't there to fund public schools adequately. Despite the fact that this government touts how much money it has put back into classrooms, 38% of classes in this province still have more than 26 students in a class. There has been a 22% decrease in the number of elementary schools with a physical education teacher and there's been a decline of 29% in the number of schools that have a music teacher. There has been a 28% decrease in the number of schools with libraries staffed by teacher-librarians.

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Education is about an approach to learning that allows students to develop all the areas of talent they have, to tap into that talent. What we have here is a sense that we

now have to relegate education to one or two areas, and the other areas, such as librarians—a librarian is there so students can take information and use it effectively, to teach them how to use all that content and the great deal of information they're given. But we have a government that says it's OK to take hundreds of millions of dollars out of public education.

Mr Marchese: I say to the member from Perth-Middlesex, get rid of those written speeches they give you. They're not very good.

First, Rozanski did not confirm that your education policies are sound. I've heard that line before from your minister. Tell her to throw away that line and that speech; it's not good. Rozanski confirmed that you're underfunding the educational system to the tune of \$2 billion, including, member for Perth-Middlesex, that you've got to upgrade your benchmarks. Remember, your minister is still funding schools on a per-square-foot basis at, I believe, \$5.29 per square foot—1997 levels. Member from Perth, those benchmarks have to be upgraded—do you understand? He did not say your education policies are sound; he didn't.

Secondly, I've got to tell you, member for Perth-Middlesex, that teachers in the private schools don't have to write any tests; they don't have to do any professional development. Why not, member from Perth? Those students in the private schools do not have to write standardized tests that you say the others in the public system have to write. Why not? Do you understand there's a double standard? You're giving away taxpayers' money and mine. I want you to make them as accountable as you make the public system. Why aren't you doing that?

Why are you subsidizing rich people like parents who send their students to Havergal, where the tuition fee is \$20,000 and more a year? Why are you using my taxpayer's money for that purpose, member for Perth-Middlesex? It's wrong. It's dumb politics and bad policy.

Hon Mr Sterling: When this issue comes up in my riding and people talk to me about taking money away from public education, I say to them, "It takes about \$7,000 to \$8,000 to educate one student in our public education system or our Catholic education system. When this program is fully implemented, do you know what it will cost the Ontario government to educate a child at that stage? It will cost about \$3,500." And they say back to me, "Isn't that a good deal for the taxpayer?" Doesn't it make sense, then, that we are only funding half of the education of these children who, if we weren't funding them, would be in the public education system? They say to me, then, "It doesn't sound half bad."

The other part is that I was the one member of this Legislature who voted against the extension of funding to Catholic schools back in 1986: 117 to 1. I said at the time that if we fully funded the education system for the Catholic faith, which represents about 43% or 44%—the largest single religious group in the province—the day would come when some party, somebody in this Legislature, would say, "You have to fund the other

religious groups." It just makes common equity, common sense. How can you say yes to the largest group but no to the smaller groups? It just doesn't bite it with regard to equity and fairness in our society.

You guys are on the wrong side of this issue; I'm sorry.

The Acting Speaker: Further questions and comments? There's one left.

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): The thing I find particularly ironic with this bill is that this is a government that wants to hold everyone accountable. Their election platform about municipalities having to hold referendums—well, I think that's leading to them taking over municipalities, as they have effectively taken over school boards or taken away any power they have.

They want to give away provincial money, taxpayer money—not Progressive Conservative money, not government money, but hard-working families' money—and say, "We don't need any accountability whatsoever for these dollars. Do what you want. You don't need to hire qualified teachers. You don't need to follow a curriculum. You don't need to do testing. Here's the money."

It is so out of character with the rhetoric that they have used over the years about holding everyone accountable—

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): And their own history.

Mr Parsons: And their own history. Their own history is, "If you're someone on welfare receiving \$516 a month and you abuse that \$516, the penalty will be massive. We will take you off welfare for the rest of your life. It's that severe a penalty for abusing \$516. But if it's \$3,500, we don't need to know what you're doing with it. Just go and do it; just go and take it."

That runs against not just this government's rhetoric but against common sense. If someone is going to accept public money, there has to be some public accountability that goes with it. We cannot write blank cheques.

There are private schools out there which quite frankly are doing superb jobs and have chosen to voluntarily follow it. But we don't do voluntary things in anything else, and we shouldn't do it. We don't do voluntary water testing any more. We don't do voluntary speed limits. We should have accountability for every nickel of a taxpayer's dollar that is being spent.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Perth-Middlesex now has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr Johnson: I'd like to thank the members for Sarnia-Lambton and Trinity-Spadina, the minister from Lanark-Carleton and the member for Prince Edward-Hastings for their responses, inquiries and, in some cases, statements.

The first thing I'd like to say is that I'm diametrically opposed to nearly everything the three members across the way said. I guess it's ideology or whatever, but I really don't think that the money you don't take because you give a tax credit is our money. I think that belongs to the taxpayer. I think that belongs in the pocket of the guy

who goes up and down the street and in the coffee shop and to work every day. I don't happen to think that that's mine and I shouldn't give it back. I really think that's his money and their money. On occasion, if it has to and needs to—and it often does—the government should say, "Yes, I'm going to take it from you." But I don't see, in saying, "No, we're not going to take it from you," that I'm taking it out of the government's pocket to give it away.

I just have a diametrically opposed vision of what government should be. It should provide the services and so on, but I don't believe, in the words of the members for Sarnia-Lambton and Trinity-Spadina, that that's our money and we're giving it away. I think that is the money of those people who send their kids to those schools, and if we don't have to take it away from them, then I'm saying I don't think we should.

Interjection.

Mr Johnson: That's why I wanted to stand up tonight and overshout the guy from Trinity-Spadina because he wants to talk louder than I do, and that's why I wanted to stand up here and say that I support Bill 53.

The Acting Speaker: The floor is open for further debate.

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): The issue of public funding of faith-based schools is one which has profoundly divided our nation since before Confederation. The issue of achieving equity in religious education is one that has profoundly divided our province throughout most of its history. It is an issue that is divisive in the riding of St Paul's as well.

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This bill is not a referendum on support for public funding of faith-based schools. About 75% of the beneficiaries of the private school tax credit, as envisioned in this bill, go to non-denominational schools. There is indeed a collateral effect upon faith-based schools in the province that are not Catholic schools.

What I'd like to talk about here this evening is why. What is the justification for continued funding of faith-based schools in the province of Ontario with respect to our Catholic system? Why would we look to extending funding to other faith-based schools that are not Catholic?

The historic reason for continuing our separate school system in Ontario does not really answer the question. Yes, at the time of Confederation there were those who championed minority religious education rights. Alexander Tilloch Galt in Lower Canada saw it as his mission to ensure that the Protestant minorities in Quebec were able to educate their children in their holy religion. In Upper Canada, R.W. Scott and the Scott Act and the resulting Quebec resolutions and the resulting entrenchment of religious school rights in the 1867 Constitution Act was a moment of recognition of the value of faith-based schools. But the minorities have changed and the numbers have changed, and today the number of Catholics and Protestants in Ontario is almost identical. The province is obviously very different, and simply saying that

we entrenched it in 1867 is an historic fact. It doesn't tell us anything about why we have continued to provide funding to faith-based schools for the Catholic system and it doesn't explain why we continue to wrestle with this issue in the province and across the country.

Historically, it was obvious. Professor McConnell of the University of Chicago Law School says that the historical evidence is powerful, that the public school movement of the 19th and early 20th centuries was a self-conscious attempt to spread Protestant values among the people, especially among immigrant groups with different religious backgrounds.

What that meant in Upper Canada was that the Catholic student had to provide the Protestant prayer, that the King James version of the Bible was what was being taught. There was coercion and alienation and discrimination against that Catholic minority in Upper Canada, so many fought to ensure that this would not happen.

As the century continued and we headed into the charter era, no longer, I think, is it totally accurate to say that our public school system was really a majoritarian Protestant-Catholic system. Nonetheless, there were remnants of the old Protestant system. So with the charter came judicial interventions time and again that held that in fact you cannot impose Protestant Christian teachings upon the public system.

Mr Justice Winkler in the 1980s said of a series of Ontario Court of Appeal decisions that the charter signified "the end of an era of majoritarian Christian influence, and the charter marked the beginning of a period of secularism in education."

This period of secularism ended the discrimination of majoritarian Protestant teachings as against non-Protestant minorities. It even ended any religious teachings against secular Ontarians. But what it did not do is remedy the continued minority religious situation in the province, whereby there was a secular system that was available to all Ontarians—our public school system, sanitized by the charter, with Protestant or other religious teachings, prayers and symbols removed. There was the Catholic system for Catholic Ontarians who wished to send their children to a publicly funded Catholic school. It might not have been exactly what all Catholic families wanted. In the riding of St Paul's, within a block you've got St Mike's private school and you've got Holy Rosary Catholic school that is part of the separate school system, and families have a choice. They can send their children, if they wish, to Holy Rosary; it may not have as much Catholic or religious content as they may wish, so if they wish they'll send their kids to St Mike's. But the accommodation is there.

Where's the accommodation of non-Catholic Ontarians, I ask, who wish to send their kids to religious schools? Right now they have no choice but to send their children to independent and private schools.

There was an effort in the 1980s among Jewish day schools to join the North York school board. In my view, that is the way we ought to provide equity in religious education funding—not through a private tax credit but

through the recommendation of the Shapiro commission in 1985. His report of the Commission on Private Schools in Ontario recommended an associated-school option whereby religious schools would associate with public school boards, meet the public school criteria, meet the public school teaching certification criteria and meet the curriculum needs and demands, but they would be different schools.

We have in Ontario a long history and a long tradition of public schools with a different orientation. It's really a misnomer to refer to our Catholic system as a separate school system. There was a Privy Council held in 1928: separate schools are but a special form of the common schools, funded by the public purse, but they are still public schools with public school rules and public school accountability.

We have other different forms of public schools in our system. The alternative schools, as the Toronto District School Board says, are a departure from mainstream schooling, but they're still part of the public system. We have special-education-oriented schools; linguistic schools; French immersion schools. These are public schools with a very specific orientation. "Thus we can have associated schools," says Commissioner Shapiro, former Deputy Minister of Education, former principal to McGill University. It would have public school accountability, but it would be this accommodation so needed to permit equity in education.

Thus the departure that this bill takes in terms of the history of the treatment of religious schools in Ontario, in Upper Canada and in Canada. In Upper Canada throughout its history, from the Scott Act to the Quebec resolutions to the BNA Act through to extensions of separate school, Catholic school, funding, there has always been a sense that it has to be done through a public system. This bill is a departure from that in that it takes public funds and doesn't try to integrate religious schools through a public system, as has been our tradition and our history, but instead says, "We'll provide a tax credit by way of accommodation."

Here are some of my concerns. First, I think we have to recognize that public school solutions are lasting solutions. Tax credits come and go; ashes to ashes, dust to dust. Tax credits come and go with a simplicity that ought to breed skepticism among supporters of this particular bill, skepticism as to the overbreadth of the tax credit, 75% of which does not cover faith-based schools; skepticism as to the reliability of the voucher approach. Changes to the Catholic separate school system, major reforms in Ontario, would require a walk into the jungle of elected and bureaucratic trenches well dug, and rightly so. Changes to a tax credit require an amendment, c'est tout; it's over. They come and they go.

If we wish to entrench a long-term answer to inequity in religious school funding, it has got to be through a public school system. It has got to be brought forward in a way that doesn't seek to divide.

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I recognize that there are members on the government side who are not simply here to play upon a wedge issue. I understand that. I understand that there are differing and varying motives on the government side. I've heard them. I've heard the member from Scarborough East say the private school tax credit approach is about achieving competition as between private schools and public schools, confirming, I think, public school supporters' worst fears. I've heard the finance minister say that this is about school choice. I've heard and I know that for the member from Thornhill, with whom I have shared a stage, along with Commissioner Shapiro, at a Canadian Jewish Congress plenary session, this bill is about faith-based funding. I understand that. I understand that there are differing purposes that have been articulated by the government.

But I think that that very small minority of families who send their children to non-Catholic religious schools, that 3% of the schoolyard population, ought to look upon the private school tax credit solution very carefully and with great skepticism. Many private schools wish to stay private. The head and principal of one of the largest and most prominent girls' schools in the country, Bishop Strachan, in the riding of St Paul's, courageously, two years ago, spoke against this private school tax credit on the basis that in the long term it was going to be divisive and harmful to the public school system and to society at large.

Private schools inevitably contain a myriad of different circumstances. Some students are there for religious and cultural reasons, yes. But I say to you and I say to Ontarians, this is a very, very small minority of Ontarians, and that particular issue ought to be addressed not through this overbroad tax credit, but through a system that directly addresses the accommodation of those particular needs. That is affordable and that is in the long-term interests of Ontario. That is not divisive. That is, if anything, assisting to associate a religious minority with the broader public system.

Some people attend private schools for reasons of geography, family tradition, school philosophy, language arts programs in the particular school. Some do because their families always sent their children to private schools. I respect, and I think everybody in this House respects, that independence and that choice. The question is, what are Ontario taxpayers going to provide in terms of support for those private schools?

Historically, what Ontario has done is said, "If there is a need in the public school system for greater flexibility and accommodation, we will do that through the public school system, not through private school tax credits." I know it is not an American invention, but it is one that interestingly was rejected by President Bush Sr. When the proposal of tax credits came before President Bush Sr, he vetoed it on the basis that he saw it as divisive and harmful to the public system. Yes, we have to create alternatives for that 3% of families of the Ontario schoolyard who attend non-Catholic religious schools,

but Bernard Shapiro, the commissioner, said, and I can tell you he still says today, the way to do that is through the associated school option, not private school tax credits.

I want to say in closing that this issue is here with us to stay. People who supported the Scott bill in the 1860s and the Quebec resolutions in 1864 in the debates make it very clear. "OK, fine, I'll support it," they say to R.W. Scott, "but only to get some closure on this issue. Let's get this done once and for all so we can move on and put the politico-religious battle behind us." I know there was a sense among those who debated this issue when Bill Davis brought it to this Legislature that, "We need to address the extension of separate school funding once and for all." Yet it's still with us.

I didn't know what to think when I read the last, closing line of Franklin A. Walker's *Catholic Education and Politics in Upper Canada*. He writes in 1974—this is his last line—"And everyone is grateful that politico-religious battles in Canada belong only to the past." They don't belong to the past. They are with us for good. We can't tuck them away and put them into a budget and think that the tax credit is the final answer. An associated schools option is but one answer—I believe the better answer and the better approach—but it will require amendments as well.

As the Canadian ethnic and religious garden diversifies, and as we have an increasingly multicultural society, we will have to deal with this issue again and again and more and more. We can't just put it away by pretending that somehow people will just forget about their religious convictions. For a very small minority of Canadians, a religion is not a hobby that can be dealt with on the weekends. For them, it involves an obligation to teach their children and pass along their holy language and their holy religion. It is for them a way of life. In the same way that many of us wouldn't even dream of pulling our kids out of a public school system, they wouldn't dream of not having their children continue their religious and cultural heritage. If we are going to accommodate those Ontarians and that conviction, and if we are going to say as a province and a government that in the long term we are going to address and respect faith-based communities and the role faith plays in our society, we must find a way to do it without dividing Ontarians along lines that don't belong in this debate.

This shouldn't be about the broader private school world versus the public school world. I believe that the way to move forward with this issue and, in the long term, address it is to find ways to bring those private, independent religious schools that are currently self-segregated out of the system, into our system—not for the purposes of assimilation, hearkening back to the historic reason for minority religious education rights; no, not for reasons of assimilation, but for reasons of profound accommodation: to try and find a way that we can work together with a system that doesn't continually divide, although I recognize that we are always going to have a number of Ontarians who feel very strongly that

not a single public dollar goes toward religious school education. There will be also a small minority of Ontarians that believe there ought to be no-strings-attached, full funding of religious schools.

I don't know if the answer is in the middle. It's not a middle-way approach. This isn't an ideological moment. It's how we as Canadians deal with this critical minority and respect faith-based communities and the role that faith plays in our province. I hope, as the years go forward and we continue to deal with this issue—because this issue is going to be an election issue and it is going to be an issue that is dealt with by the next government. There are going to be further judicial challenges, no doubt, and there is going to be further angst amongst members that we need to deal with this issue once and for all and put it behind us. We won't; we can't. Unfortunately, for this issue, the simple way is not the best way.

I look forward to hearing members' comments, but I hope everybody in this House realizes that when we're dealing with the very small religious minorities that wish to send their kids to religious school, the politics of this is one thing; addressing and accommodating their needs in a way that is quintessentially Canadian—consistent with the traditions and history of Ontario, but consistent with the new era of the charter that respects religious minority education—is going to be one of our greatest challenges.

I have invested a lot of my own time as an MPP in my community, through town hall meetings, constant meetings, hours upon hours of letters, speeches—every effort that I can, to try and meet with the community on this issue. I will continue to do that, but I simply cannot support this bill.

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The Acting Speaker: Members now have up to two minutes for questions and comments.

Mr Prue: I listened with some considerable interest to the speaker from St Paul's, especially when he was talking about the historical perspectives of our schools. Being one of the older members of the Legislature, although definitely not the oldest, I remember quite clearly the schools of the 1950s in Toronto, having attended schools which were quite profoundly Protestant in nature. Every day we said the Lord's Prayer in the King James version, and when people stopped at the Catholic version—and we did have Catholics in our classes—that was not considered appropriate. I remember later on, when they stopped at the Catholic version without the last two lines, that we had members of faith communities continue to say the last two lines, much to the consternation of the teacher at the time. I do remember that.

But I want to say that in the evolution in the 50 years since I first started to attend school, there has been a profound change in our school system: a school system where, yes, I did know a couple of Jewish students and a couple of Catholic students—I don't think there were any other religions that I can remember at the time. We now have almost a complete, I would suggest, melting pot in our school systems. We have Muslim students and Jewish students and Hindu students and Jains. We have

Shinto students and people who have no beliefs at all. We have people who are Native Canadians who have a spiritual value. It seems to me that the coexistence you see today is something to marvel at, not something that we should in any way denigrate.

I'm not sure, having listened to the member for St Paul's, that the associate school option is the right way to go. I remain to be convinced on his last statement. It's not assimilation but profound accommodation. If we can do it, so much the better, but not to the detriment of the public school system.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): I say to my friend opposite, the member from St Paul's, this is probably one of those issues where you should have just sat down and let someone else speak. Over here, as we listened to your speech, the comment was, "Boy is he dancing on this one."

I've got to tell you, I look back at the member opposite when the tax credit issue was first brought up—what's his quote in the *Toronto Star* on May 12, 2001? He said, "I can't suck and blow on this (the tax credit). I've got to support this. It's a step in the direction of equity." How has he voted on it so far? With his party, in opposition to it.

I don't blame him for being confused and a little disheartened. Other members of his caucus have supported it in the past. Monte Kwinter, for example, said, "I've always supported it. As a matter of fact, I advocated it for 16 years. Since before the last election, I sponsored a rally outside of Queen's Park. We had 5,000 people in support of the position that there is a real issue of discrimination." How did he vote on this in this Legislature? Opposed.

His own leader—let's talk about Dalton McGuinty's position. It said in 1998, in an article in the *Canadian Jewish News*: "Opposition leader Dalton McGuinty told Ontario's Jewish leadership that he had no ideological opposition to ensuring public funds support ... day schools. It is believed that this is the first time any provincial party leader has made such a declaration."

In 2001 he said, "I believe that parents"—this is McGuinty again—"should have the right to choose a school that best meets the needs of their child. I think that's a good idea. It's an idea whose time has come."

Interjection: Who said that?

Mr Maves: Dalton McGuinty. In an interview with the *Ottawa Citizen*, the *Citizen* said, "If you end up in government," Mr McGuinty, "would you repeal this tax?" "Yes," he said. Then they said, "Will you provide families with a tax credit?" "If we're looking at equity, yes, somewhere down the road." He doesn't know where he stands. Finally, in this Legislature, he's totally opposed to it.

Later on I'm going to read some more of the Liberal quotes. They all show similar flip-flopping and lack of position on this issue, as did the member for St Paul's.

Mr McMeekin: I think when it comes to surface contradictions, there are enough of them to go around on all sides of the House. One of the honourable members

on this side pointed to some of the correspondence back and forth with the UN, but I won't go there.

I want to just say thank you to the speaker from St Paul's who, I think, brought some helpful and thoughtful reflections to this debate and, dare I say it, even some profound insights. To look for the third way—or the right look in one's eye—as one approaches policy is often very difficult. As one who believes that tolerance always begins at the point of difference, I know just how troubling it can sometimes be to seek out and find that third appropriate, accommodating way.

I was particularly impressed that he made reference to the folly of thinking that this tax credit in its current form—and by the way, we are the only province in all of Canada that would provide this kind of funding to independent schools this way. In virtually every other province where independent schools are funded, they are in fact funded through an affiliated model, if you look at what's going on there.

The concept of once and for all I think has its own inherent contradictions. There's no equity to this. This tax credit, if passed in its current form, will prescribe to those who avail themselves of it a very inequitable situation, potentially for some considerable time.

I'm with the member from St Paul's, who I think was professing a desire to try to find ways where we might broaden the concept of what constitutes public education and actually move toward a just and equitable solution that's accommodating for people who have these special needs.

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): It does give me pleasure to respond to what I know must have been a particularly difficult speech for the member for St Paul's to make, because I recognize the incredible diversity he has in his riding of St Paul's. The reason I say that is because I know in my riding of Scarborough Centre, we too have the same kinds of diversity issues, certainly in dealing with a challenge such as the equity bill that is before us today.

To continue with what my friend from Niagara Falls was saying, some of that conflict clearly does rest within his own party. For example, I listened with some interest to the legal arguments that my friend from St Paul's made because I know he is a lawyer and certainly he has spoken quite eloquently in the past on constitutional matters. Yet it's interesting that when the United Nations Human Rights Committee handed down its decisions, Monte Kwinter was quoted as saying, "I now call on the government of Ontario to respond in a positive way to this United Nations Human Rights Committee ruling."

It's interesting that Mr McGuinty said, "If we're looking at equity, yes, somewhere down the road," but in another breath, "McGuinty said while he has long recognized that it is unfair that religious schools do not receive funding, he cannot commit to funding private education." Therein lies the dilemma.

The Acting Speaker: The member for St Paul's has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr Bryant: I thank the members for Beaches-East York, Niagara Falls, Ms Mushinski and the member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot for their comments.

This is a complicated issue. I'm not pretending that it isn't a complicated issue. That is why this is difficult. I'm saying that if we approach this complicated problem with, in my view, an oversimplified response, in the long term we'll not obtain the consensus to have a lasting solution. While it may be a quick answer to the issue, it's not in the long-term interests of the province or even of those who support faith-based education to support this particular proposal.

Sure it's complicated, so if you want to cut and paste different parts of what people say, then you can catch them out. I understand that. I do that in opposition, and I understand the government members over there are doing that. That's their job. They're supposed to be here to criticize this speech. You're right, I say to the member for Niagara Falls: the easy thing to do is just not to say anything at all. But there are times and there are issues that we face sometimes, as legislators and in our ridings, when we feel compelled to rise in our place and try to explain our position, however imperfectly, in 20 minutes.

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I can just say that I do not believe this simplified answer is any satisfactory way to address this incredibly complicated problem. What Shapiro advocated and what I am advocating on my own behalf here, as a member in this Legislature, is admittedly complicated and more difficult than simply implementing a tax credit, but in my view it is the longer-term solution. On this issue we have a disagreement and we're going to have a debate, but I say to the government members, this particular solution will not in the long-term achieve any broad consensus that will have a lasting solution, in the public interest or when it comes to supporting faith-based communities.

The Acting Speaker: The floor is open for further debate.

Ms Mushinski: Mr Speaker, I must add that I really enjoyed being part of the official party with you on Friday during the visit of the Duke of York. I appreciate that.

I am particularly pleased to rise in support of The Right Choices for Equity in Education Act. The 2001 throne speech promised parents in Ontario both flexibility and choice in education for their children. I believe The Right Choices for Equity in Education Act would assist parents who want more choice for their children's education, which of course includes the choice to send their children to schools that offer their religion, their culture and their values. In some cases, certainly in areas of my riding, the three are not even distinct; they are part and parcel of the same thing.

In the words of my colleague the Honourable Jim Flaherty, who instituted the equity in education tax credit during his incumbency as Minister of Finance in 2001, "Ontarians have taken to heart the fact that we are one of the most diverse and cosmopolitan societies in the world.

Ontarians don't need any longer to be told that they are diverse or how, from a top-down, government-approved perspective, their diversity should be recognized and expressed."

Mr Flaherty went on to say, "They still want top-quality public schools, and I am quite confident that most Ontario parents will continue to choose to send their children to those schools as long as they meet their children's needs. But a significant number of our fellow citizens and taxpayers know that their children will be best served by an independent school because of the unique educational, cultural"—Caroline, you should be listening to this—"or religious opportunities independent schools provide."

This bill, Bill 53, speaks to many crucial aspects of life in Ontario. We've heard a little bit about the historical perspective of Ontario and what Ontario is. Perhaps more important than our diversity, which has become our calling card around the world, is indeed the history of our diversity. Independent schools are both a reflection and a barometer of the range of this diversity.

I will be providing some detail a little later about some of the schools that are part of this program but, first, if you will allow me, I'd like to explain how the program itself works.

For 2002, the tax credit reimbursed 10% of the first \$7,000 of tuition fees, for a maximum tax credit of \$700 per child, and 10% of the first \$3,500 of tuition fees for a child of kindergarten age, for a maximum tax credit of \$350. If the Legislature approves this bill, the tax credit rate will rise to a maximum of \$1,400, or 20% per child for 2003, 30% for 2004, 40% for 2005, and 50% for 2006 and beyond.

Both the schools offering the credit and the parents claiming it must meet certain eligibility criteria. Since my esteemed colleagues have already provided the members of this House with those details, I don't propose to repeat them. But while many of the independent schools that are part of the program are for religious, linguistic or cultural instruction, others are not. They run the gamut from arts and sciences to specialized programs for students who are academically gifted. Still others are for an alternative model of education based on a specific set of values and criteria. I'd like to offer some examples of the kinds of schools that we're talking about.

The Leonardo Da Vinci Academy of Arts and Sciences in Etobicoke is one such institution. According to its mission statement, "The Leonardo Da Vinci Academy aims to instill a love of learning and to challenge students to develop their whole potential in the manner inspired by Leonardo. The goal is to nurture the growth of responsible individuals who are rooted in their heritage, in balance with their world, and secure on the path to self-knowledge within a Catholic setting."

This is an independent school. Founded in 1983, and inspired by the genius of one of the world's greatest thinkers and creators and, of course, artists, the Leonard Da Vinci Academy offers an academic program from preschool to grade 8. The academic program focuses on

academic excellence, independent thinking skills and self-discipline, promoted within a healthy Catholic environment. In keeping with Da Vincian principals, the overall program includes a well-balanced curriculum of studies in sciences, arts and humanities. A rich after-school program of diverse clubs and sports serves to further enhance learning, promote school spirit and develop social skills and responsibility.

On the school's Web site, principal Sal Ritacca, offers this statement: "The degree to which any useful philosophy of education is successfully implemented is readily measured—one need only observe the children. Children who have been encouraged to 'Think like Leonardo' will be freed from 'limitation' thinking, will have a healthy self-esteem, and a heightened respect for the world. They will be joyful and autonomous participants in their own learning and self-discovery." So you see, even though the Leonardo Da Vinci Academy does have a Catholic focus, it also expands to incorporate the vision and the philosophy of the great man himself.

Let me offer you another example. The Grey Gables School in St Catharines offers a teaching program that combines the superb practices of the Montessori method with those of the world-renowned international baccalaureate program and Dr Renzulli's triad enrichment model, along with some practices from Rudolph Steiner's Waldorf schools and Dr Thomas Berry's story model for global education.

The Grey Gables Arts and Sports Academy is incorporated into the international baccalaureate programs for Grey Gables students and offers them unique and exceptional opportunities to pursue their passion for the arts or sports.

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Grey Gables School is recognized for extremely high academic standards and courses that are taught by an extraordinary and caring faculty who set high standards for themselves and their students in order to inspire them to reach their potential. The academic program is complemented by opportunities for students to participate in varied and dynamic extracurricular and leadership activities as well as community service initiatives, and I think that's a very important part of the all-rounding of a student, certainly not just in the independent school system but most certainly in the public school system.

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Grey Gables School is recognized for its high academic standards and courses that are taught by an extraordinary—as I've already said—and caring faculty who have set high standards for themselves. The academic program is complemented by opportunities for students to participate in varied and dynamic extracurricular activities.

The Right Choices for Equity in Education Act clearly is about that: it's about choices. I can't think of anything

more equitable than an act that speaks to maximizing choice and opportunity in this province. It's about freedom; it's about flexibility; it's about the flexibility to make a judgment on what will best serve the religious, cultural and educational needs of one's children.

We of course believe in a strong publicly funded education system and we believe in respecting the right of parents to choose. We believe that our children and their parents must come first in Ontario's diverse education system. In 1995, when we took office, education funding stood at \$12.9 billion. The government has increased funding in this province for the education system every year since then. With the enhancements announced in the 2003 budget, education funding for the upcoming 2003-04 school year, including direct provincial transfers and education property taxes, stands at a record \$15.3 billion, the highest level of education funding in Ontario's history.

The projected base target for school boards for the 2005-06 school year will be almost \$2 billion, or 14%, higher than the 2002-03 education funding level announced in the 2002 Ontario budget. This will enable the education system to focus on what every parent wants—certainly they tell me in my riding of Scarborough Centre—which is improved learning and higher achievement for our students, something that was unheard of in the 10 lost years before we were elected in 1995 as a government.

The tax credit is funded from the tax system and does not remove funding from public education. How many times until the Liberals are going to get it? It does not remove funding from public education. What it does is increase the number of educational opportunities available to our children.

In the 2003 Ontario budget, we proposed to accelerate the tax credit phase-in schedule announced in the 2002 budget. That would increase the tax credit rate to 20% of eligible tuition fees for 2003, and further increase it by 10% a year, until the credit is fully implemented in 2006 at a 50% rate, as I've said earlier.

As has already been stated in this House, especially by the Attorney General, the tax credit can be claimed on up to \$7,000 of eligible tuition fees per child, which is about the average per-student expenditure on public education in this province.

The 2003 budget also proposed to legislate the remaining steps of the tax credit phase-in to establish this plan in law.

The equity in education tax credit benefits the parents of Ontario. Our tax credit will help middle- and lower-income parents to exercise their choice to preserve their cultural and religious diversity. Our government recognizes that in a diverse society such as ours, parents will choose schools that are appropriate for their children's needs or offer a curriculum that they desire.

The equity in education tax credit provides our parents with a choice in the education of their children and with greater certainty in making decisions about their future. It will increase accountability in the school system and lead

to improvements in the quality of our education system and student performance.

Our student support for equality and choice in education would provide our students with the added tools that they need to succeed. It supports our parents' fundamental right to have input into their children's education, and it gives them the flexibility they need to make the choices for their children at a time in their development when it is most crucial.

The Acting Speaker: Members now have up to two minutes for questions or comments.

Ms Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): I'm very happy to be here to listen in on the debate tonight, because we know that tonight's debate really is central to what we'll be talking about during the upcoming provincial election. It identifies how different we are. One party, namely the Ontario Liberal Party, believes that public education is the great equalizer out there for all kids, no matter where they come from.

As we watch the debate unfold and meet the people who are affected on both sides, it takes many of us back to our early years and our own public education and what it meant to our parents and grandparents that kids from around the world would come here, or be first-generation Canadian from immigrant parents, and realize that our school system is meant to give every single one of us a fair and equitable chance.

I believe the government has gone down the road to throw that right out the window. I believe that this move toward tax credits for private schools, just to give more opportunity to take kids out of the public system, is wrong-headed. It goes in absolutely the wrong direction from where we should be going.

I believe that our schools should be filled with kids from everywhere, with all of us getting equal opportunity, and that that education system has to be great. It has to give all that we have to offer our children. It has to be filled with proper supports for kids who need assistance in the classroom. It has to be filled not just with the basics but with the extras, because art matters and music matters and phys ed matters and health matter. Our curriculum has to be that fulsome and wholesome that people don't go looking for extra in some other system.

I ultimately believe that Windsor is the great, diverse community it is because our public education system was there for our kids. I believe that all of us who do well in this society do well because of our public education system.

When we come to vote on this, it is ultimately that much of a fundamental issue.

Mr Prue: I listened to the member from Scarborough Centre, as I always try to do. I try not to heckle her, although she's constantly doing that to me. I listened to her, and she was talking about good private schools. I have no doubt in my mind that in this fair province there are some good private schools. But what she didn't talk about, what she never once said about those good private schools, is how much it costs per year, per student to attend them. As we all know, we spend about \$7,500 per

student per year in the public school system to educate all the students: those who are good, those who need special attention, those who are having problems, those who have family and emotional problems.

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We know some of those private schools that print their rates: Havergal College, \$20,000. We know all of those schools. When you spend two and a half times what you spend in the public school system, you have to think they are at least as good. I would contend that for two and a half times the price, they probably are at least as good as the public school system. But what she didn't talk about is all the other schools. Many of these small ones are unregulated schools. They don't have the stature of Havergal or Upper Canada College, and a lot of them are in financial and other difficulties.

I ask you why you didn't mention St James International Academy, which is the subject of some 30 lawsuits, where people and teachers have not been paid for years and where there are people from the Chinese community who have been ripped off, member from Scarborough Centre, by a system which you have no controls on. I would suggest to you that that's the real difficulty. You want to give money to the parents of private school students but you do not put any controls whatsoever on them. That is the problem of this whole bill. You deregulated—and freebees—and no thought about the student in the end.

Mr Maves: I want to commend the member from Scarborough Centre on her comments—always wise and reasonable comments on every issue when she stands in this Legislature.

I encourage the member from Windsor West to go back and rethink her quotes that public education is the great equalizer. The great equalizer in the world is actually education. It's not public education, it's not separate school education, it's not independent school education, it's not home school education; it is education that is the great equalizer. We shouldn't be prejudiced against one way of learning or another way of learning in Ontario.

On this issue, I stood up earlier and read a quote from the member from St Paul's, who said, "I can't suck and blow on this. I've got to support this" tax credit. "It's a step in the direction of equity." Then he turned around and voted against this bill every time, proving that, yes, indeed, he can suck and blow on this issue.

But when one goes through all the different quotes from the Liberals on different issues, there's a great one on this issue. If this doesn't define Liberals in Ontario, I don't know what does. This is from Greg Sorbara, a member of the Liberals opposite, to the Liberal Party leader. Here's his quote, and I urge you all to pay attention. On this issue he said, "The Liberals were equivocal. We were not violently opposed or thoroughly in favour. But while in power we did nothing about the issue, and we're avoiding it now. We see the merits of both sides of the issue, in typically Liberal fashion." Now, if that doesn't define a Liberal, I do not know what quote does. The Liberals on this issue and on just about

every other issue facing Ontario cannot make up their minds.

Ms Di Cocco: I have to say that it's interesting to listen to the member from Niagara Falls.

I want to read again from the draft submission that the Ontario government thoughtfully made to the United Nations. I have to say, one of the arguments that was put forth was by Madam Justice McLachlin, who considered this issue under the charter. I'm going to read something she said about this that was submitted by the government to the United Nations. This is what she said about fully funding public schools: "Its objective, the record shows, is to foster a strong public secular school system attended by students of all cultural and religious groups. Canada in general and Ontario in particular is a multicultural, multi-religious society. A multicultural, multi-religious society can only work, it is felt, if people of all groups understand and tolerate each other."

It goes on to say, "According to the Shapiro report submitted in evidence, the public school context represents the most promising potential for realizing a more fully tolerant society. Children of all races and religions learn together and play together. No religion is touted over any other. The goal is to provide a forum for the development of respect for the beliefs and customs of all cultural groups, and for their ethical and moral values." I believe they had it right here.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Scarborough now has up to two minutes to respond.

Ms Mushinski: I'd like to express my thanks to the members for Windsor West, Beaches-East York, Niagara Falls and Sarnia-Lambton for their submissions to my submission.

In response to what both the members for Windsor West and Sarnia-Lambton said—it's interesting, because I know the member for Sarnia-Lambton referred to the United Nations Human Rights Committee's decision, and my colleague from Niagara has already stated a quote from the Ontario Hansard of 16 November 1999 by Liberal MPP Monte Kwinter, who said, "I now call on the government of Ontario to respond in a positive way to this United Nations Human Rights Committee ruling."

But interestingly enough, on January 21—this is just a couple of months later—Dalton McGuinty wrote a letter to Lloyd Axworthy—remember him?—saying: "I urge your government to reject the UNHRC's request." So again, there are clear indications of the Liberal unrest and inability to take a stand on this particular issue.

And I would suggest, if I may, to my good friend from Beaches-East York, that, yes, I may heckle occasionally, but not all the time, and it is in a nice way, because I have the highest respect for the member for Beaches-East York. He and I used to serve on a municipal council together. But I would say to him, don't go there when you talk about private schools. I remember going to Sault Ste Marie and listening to a situation there regarding a teacher in the public school system who had been moved from board to board, and that was a disgrace on the public education—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. The floor is open for further debate.

Ms Di Cocco: I stand to speak on Bill 53. This bill is entitled The Right Choices for Equity in Education Act. What I'm going to try to discuss tonight are four different aspects of this bill. One is about the finances and the public policy facts, another is about the philosophy under which this bill supposedly comes, and some other areas about the impact that's happened in public education over the last eight years.

First of all, the tax credit last year was postponed because it was deemed unaffordable. It was supposed to have started last year, but these tax cuts, and this tax credit particularly, were postponed. I believe one of the members talked about the fact that if you postpone a tax, then it's considered a tax hike. I believe I understood that. I find it interesting, because they did that last year but they don't consider that a tax hike.

First of all, this tax credit will be a tremendous financial hardship, because the cost of this tax credit is anywhere from \$300 million to \$500 million when it's fully implemented. We don't really know what the cost is going to be, because the tax credit may push more people into the private system. This money has to come from somewhere. We constantly hear that the \$500 million—or potentially \$500 million—won't cost anything, but it will. It is going to be taken out of public education. Public education is where 96% of our student population in Ontario go. They all go to public education.

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Secondly, I believe it's poor public policy. It's poor public policy because one of the strongest aspects that has shaped and created our tolerant society and tolerant community, with all its diversities, to work and understand and accept one another and in turn created this Canadian model of multiculturalism, is our strong public education system. One of the reasons that our population is woven into such a strong fabric with all of its diversity is because of our public education system. When children of various religions and nationalities sit side by side, learn together, play together, share their values and traditions, that's when the barriers truly come down; that is when there is acceptance of those differences. That's why we have to protect public education. I believe we heard the former Premier, Bill Davis, speak with great emotion about saving and protecting our public education system.

When we had our comments, I certainly spoke about the submission made by the Ontario government in 1998 to the United Nations committee. Its submission is in total contradiction to what is being said in this House today. It astounds me that exactly what we hear over and over again is a contradiction of what is in black and white. This is a thoughtful submission that was made to a United Nations committee on the value of public education and justifying, if you will, the position of the Ontario government in protecting public education. Over and over again, what they said in this submission is in direct contrast to what they're doing today under this bill.

These are the consequences of, I believe, failed education policy. That is what we have seen over eight years. We have had three and a half times as many lost student days as the previous two governments combined. That has led to a great deal of instability in the system and an erosion, constantly creating a crisis in our public system, therefore opening the door to suggesting, "Do you know what? Maybe we should be funding our private education system so that we can alleviate the burden of pain for our public education system." I believe that may have been the intent.

First of all, the government cannot afford the money for this education tax credit; it is going to undermine our public education system. More importantly, that money is needed, as we have seen in the report that was handed out not long ago. We know that we have to put money back into the system to restore it. I believe it is \$2 billion that has to be restored, according to Dr Rozanski, immediately into the system. That is an incredible amount of money. That's what he said.

We're also, as you know, taking the education portion of our property tax from seniors. The education portion of their property tax is going to be rebated to seniors. That means that approximately \$450 million less, I think the figure was, is going to be directed to education. That's a lot of money that is going to be taken out of our public education system.

I've heard a number of government members talk about all this money they're putting back into the system, but I want to talk about some of the consequences we've had with regard to even our public spaces these days, because after 1998 when they began this notion of user fees that are required now to pay for schools, to pay for gyms, to pay for classroom spaces and schoolyards—for instance, community basketball teams used to go and use these facilities. Now they have to pay a great deal more money than they did before and it has become inaccessible for these community sports. These low-entry costs to sports are now becoming unaffordable because the school space they require is too expensive.

I talked about this the other evening when we were again debating one of the bills, because I think it's really important. We have a sedentary lifestyle these days; our children have a sedentary lifestyle. The consequences of this mean we're going to have many more cases of juvenile diabetes, many more cases of obesity and many more cases of heart disease and other diseases linked to a sedentary lifestyle. That's what is happening today because we watch TV and our children watch TV many more hours than when I was a child. Not only that, we now sit in front of a computer monitor and children do not get the exercise they need. Not only have the spaces now become inaccessible because of the cost, we have fewer phys ed teachers and recreational opportunities for our students in the system because these are now considered frills. We are doing a great disservice to our youth in both of these areas, and it is very nearsighted, in my opinion, to allow this to happen.

I'm going to give a couple of examples of exactly how much costs have gone up to use public space in schools—public space that has already been paid for by public dollars. The Barrie Royals have a basketball club of about 1,200 kids. Their school space has gone from \$3,000 a year to \$50,000. We're not talking about students and parents who can afford to pay hundreds of dollars to play community sports. These are house leagues. They're not travel sports. Not only are there physical benefits of phys ed and the activities of basketball for young people or any sport, but it also keeps them off the street, yet here we've got school space in Barrie that's inaccessible because it has gone from \$3,000 to \$50,000.

Deep River is a one-high-school town. In Deep River there's a Dr David Lee who is a physicist. Five years ago, he volunteered to start up a basketball club. Again, the costs went from \$1,000 to \$10,000. Why am I saying this? I'm saying this because of the consequences of the funding formula and how they have created a system that is now breaking up our accessibility to our public schools, even after school, because they have now become inaccessible, thank you very much to the narrow-minded policies of the government.

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Here we've got this happening, and on the other hand, you have the government saying, "But we want to fund private schools. We're going to take \$500 million"—from \$300 million to \$500 million; as I said, we don't know the numbers yet—"and put it into private schools." There is a choice. A private school is just that, it's a private school. Unfortunately, we also want to do this with no strings attached.

It's important to me that we have a public system that works. What we have now is an erosion in our public school system that is, in my view and my understanding, unprecedented. It is unfortunate, because our public school system has been earned through a great deal of pain, a great deal of understanding about what education is to people, how everyone learns differently, how we all have different abilities in our intellect. Yet what we've got now is a very narrow focus on learning that is jeopardizing good education for our children.

What we have is larger class sizes. Our specialist teachers have decreased by 22%. How does that make our system better? I don't know how. I don't see that it does. Somehow we figure that teacher-librarians are expendable. They have had a 28% decrease. We have information overload in our students. The ability to organize that information and the ability of our students to understand or have more critical thinking when it comes to that information is where teacher-librarians come in. They help them do the research and help them to make sense out of that information overload. What have we done? We've cut them. We have 28% fewer teacher-librarians.

We have 42,000 students on waiting lists for special education. Many of our students cannot be the best they can be because they have been waiting two and three years to be assessed. In my days when I did some teaching—and I taught music—my greatest success was when

I could get students who had some difficulties to achieve and be the best they could be. Then you know that you are really doing a good job, because it's easy to teach the student who is gifted and can learn in spite of the teacher. But it is those who require special education who need the extra effort by the professionals. What we have is 42,000 students waiting.

We have English-as-a-second-language programs; it takes seven years. I certainly didn't have an English-as-a-second-language program when I began school in this country when I six years old. I know that we have learned a lot since then, and yet what have we done? We have a 63% increase in the number of schools reporting English-as-a-second-language students, but we have had no programs since 1999-2000.

Another amazing part for me is that since 1997-98, we've had a 55% increase in the number of schools that are reporting fundraising for classroom supplies. This fundraising is not for the extras, it's for actual classroom supplies.

I talked about the community use of schools but there has been a 113% increase in the number of schools reporting fees for community use. All I can say is that in my area I see so many schools that are closing. We have a school that is full, that was shut down just last year—this was the last year, and in September the school will be shut. The school had a 95% capacity and it had a full junior kindergarten, but the funding gives school boards a bonus, if you want, if they can warehouse students. That's what's happening in my riding. I find that very troubling, to say the least.

I believe that we have an obligation in this province. We have an obligation to return stability to our schools and, more importantly, we have an obligation to value and to have educators understand that we value their work. We value the other encompassing aspect of schools, and that is that the community uses the schools for their community sports, for Girl Guides, for Boy Scouts, for all of those various community activities where a school used to be the hub, where they used to meet, where they used to go after school hours and where volunteers, parents and others would work with students.

Now what happens is our schools are dark in the evenings. If there's a soccer team that wants to use a schoolyard now, or a baseball team, it's very rare any more, because it's all shut down and padlocked. We have lost a sense that our school is not just a place where you have people go to learn from 9 to 3 or 9 to 4, but it's a place that had space for the community as a whole.

I have many examples of very good programs where volunteers would be bringing in children, young people and youth from the community and they'd come together and organize teams of basketball, indoor soccer etc. And what do we have? These spaces now have become unaffordable. I think it is a crime.

While this government pretends that it has money to pay for private schools, it does not have proper funding to make sure that all of the 96% of children who go to public schools in this province are given the best quality

education so that they can be the best they can be. I think this government has forgotten and has lost its way from the time of Premier Davis.

The Acting Speaker: For the last time this evening, up to four members have up to two minutes for questions and comments.

Mr Marchese: I say that the member for Sarnia-Lambton has made a good case to show how the public school system has received less and less over the last eight years under this government than any other previous government. She talked about the fact that we have fewer librarians, fewer music teachers, fewer people using our schools because they can't afford it and so on.

Yet this government has been able to find, to date, 120 million bucks to fund private schools such as Upper Canada College and Havergal, just up the street. They've been able to find 120 million bucks from somewhere.

The member from Scarborough Centre says it's not coming from the public system. Where is the money coming from, if it isn't coming from the public system? Where is the \$120 million to date coming from, member from Scarborough Centre? Tell us that, whenever you get another opportunity, or any other Tory member who is going to respond in the next two minutes.

2120

The member for Niagara Centre says the great equalizer is not public education but education in general, which includes private schools. Ha, I think to myself. Is it a level playing field when a wealthy child is educated in a private school with ample resources both at home and in the private school, while a child in an inner-city school in a public system languishes without adequate textbooks, without support from librarians, music teachers, physical education teachers, educational assistants and special-ed services? That's not equity. I don't know what Flaherty and Ecker are thinking, but that's not equity.

New Democrats would tax those wealthy individuals who can afford to send their kids to Havergal and Upper Canada College and restore some of the money they have taken from me and put it back to a public system where it belongs. That's what we would do.

Mr Maves: I've been searching all night and I found this wonderful quote from Gerretsen, the member for Kingston and the Islands. The member upset me so much, I dropped my book and lost my place and now I'm not going to be able to read the quote. I'm going to have to inform Mr Gerretsen that he helped them out and he looked after them, but he didn't know—

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): Just make it up like you usually do.

Mr Maves: No, I never make it up, I say to the member opposite. I go by Hansard and I go by other reliable sources.

Speaking of reliable sources, this debate has produced a lot of quotes from the Liberals. I read one earlier from Mr Sorbara that just defines Liberals to a T. I happened to come across another one from the same Mr Sorbara, and it's about this issue. Mr Sorbara is a member of the present Liberal Party and a member currently from the

Liberal opposition bench, right now a man very much in charge of the Liberal Party platform. Here's what he said, "I support in principle the notion that denominational schools could have support from the public taxpayer base," but this tax credit, "You're putting the money in the hands of parents, rich or poor, and that's a really crazy thing to do." He thinks putting money into the hands of taxpayers—their money, leaving their money in their hands—is a crazy thing to do.

I've lost my place in the book here to find the quote from Gerretsen, but last week we were in here and he was talking about the seniors' property tax credit. He said that the principal reason—now I'm paraphrasing, Speaker, I wish I had the quote—for the existence of government is to tax people. Now that doesn't surprise me. It's an NDP philosophy too, and it goes hand in hand obviously with Mr Sorbara's quote that putting taxpayers' money in the hands of the people is a crazy thing to do.

As we go forward in this debate, I look forward to collecting more quotes like this from the members opposite.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. We're getting there and we are going to get there.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Please don't make me stand up. Let's just do this. I will recognize the member from St Catharines. Please listen attentively.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I'll try to be non-provocative as always and very reasonable with both government and opposition.

I want to comment on one important aspect the member for Sarnia-Lambton raised, which is a little broader issue than perhaps she intended, but it's the issue of user fees. I've been observing for some period of time the number of kids, young people particularly, who are not able to take part in activities because of user fees. In my own community, the local politicians will say, and I think with justification, that because they've been downloaded upon, they have had to raise their user fees. In various schools, which used to be used for such things as Girl Guides and Boy Scouts and other constructive activities, the fees for the use of the schools or the schoolyards have gone up considerably. As a result, a lot of young people are not able to engage in what I call productive and useful activities.

Within the context of the public school building, we have seen this as a community centre and when the member identifies that, if I can broaden it a bit, I think of municipalities as well making decisions that I think ultimately may keep their tax rate down, and indeed they won't be able to raise taxes if this government is re-elected. They will be forced to go to more and more user fees, which are toughest on people or families which have a modest income. I think all of us in this House, regardless of our political affiliation, want to see young people involved in productive and constructive activities that will enhance their citizenship and their character. I

think what the member describes happening with user fees is militating against that.

Mr Prue: I rise to respond to the member for Sarnia-Lambton and I congratulate her for what she had to say. I want to tell you that we in the New Democratic Party are unequivocal in our opposition to this bill. We are opposed to it and we say quite bluntly and quite categorically, "No money to private schools." It's as simple as that. We are not going to equivocate here in any way.

We believe that our public school system is crumbling. We believe that it needs \$1.5 billion in extra money now, not over three years. We believe that the local school boards should be given back autonomy, instead of having it taken away from them. We believe in full-time staff, including principals and vice-principals and caretakers and secretaries and everyone who looks after those kids every day.

We believe in financing sufficient that crumbling buildings, particularly in older towns and cities—including Toronto and all over Ontario where those schools are starting to crumble, where the roofs are leaking and where everything is going to pot—can be fixed.

We believe that our playgrounds are places not only for kids during the day but for kids and adults at night and that user fees are killing ordinary programs around this city and around this province and they need to be fixed.

We also believe that the money that is being spent here has to come from somewhere. Where is this money coming from? If it's not coming from the schools, as so many Conservative speakers have said, where is it coming from? Is it coming from the hospitals? Is it coming from daycare? Is it coming from seniors care? Is it coming from money that should have gone to municipalities? Where is the money coming from? If the money is there, it should be spent where it is needed, and that is in our school system—not in the private school system and not in systems where people already have enough and don't need our money.

Mr Maves: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Since the members opposite were afraid I would misquote their

colleague, I wonder if I could have unanimous consent to read the quote as it is verbatim in Hansard?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: I'm sorry, I hear at least one no.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Just as long as everyone knows that, like in a classroom, one person is going to keep us all here. I can take another speaker and keep you here for quite a bit.

The member for Sarnia-Lambton to respond.

Ms Di Cocco: I want to thank the members from Trinity-Spadina, Niagara Falls, St Catharines and Beaches-East York. I do have to say to the member for Niagara Falls, don't throw stones, as I believe was said the other day, if you live in a glass house.

First of all, when you want to talk about the notion of changes—your government had a paradigm shift when it came to its presentation to the United Nations on public education versus private funding. When you want to talk about what Ernie Eves, the Premier of Ontario, says today and what he said in December 2001, that he thought this, "was kind of ludicrous myself," when he was talking about school tax credits, "without standards"—he said it was ludicrous. He also mentioned, when he was talking about tax credits, schools teaching hatred—he went that far. I don't want to go there, because I believe there's a glass house over there.

That is my issue with this government, because they have had a paradigm shift in their philosophy, and they did not go into the election in 1999 with any notion of public funding for private schools. They didn't go into the election in 1999 saying anything of that nature. I take exception to this notion that others have had a paradigm shift when in fact it is their policy that is moving this province in the wrong direction when it comes to Bill 53.

The Acting Speaker: It being almost 9:30 of the clock, this House will stand adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 2130.

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Tuesday 17 June 2003

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Mardi 17 juin 2003

Speaker
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 17 June 2003

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 17 juin 2003

The House met at 1332.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): My statement today is to the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services. Minister, I have been a member of the Hastings Children's Aid Society for over 25 years. Thanks to some good changes in legislation, we have the most children in care ever, but at the same time we have the worst funding challenges we've ever experienced.

Your ministry funds the number of workers employed by the agency based on the volume of caseload. That makes perfect sense, although they now spend most of their time filling out the forms that your ministry has generated. On the other hand, your ministry does not properly fund places for children to live. It is you who sets the rates for what outside, paid institutions can charge, but you then have the nerve to give the children's aid society less than that to pay for these outside, paid resources.

Workers have to drive to do their investigation. They cannot accomplish child safety in the office. Your ministry funds mileage for workers at a dismal rate.

Last, you need to know that when you hire new workers, they need to have an office and a desk. You provide no capital funds. CAS in Belleville is forced to rent a number of office spaces—extremely inefficient. At the same time, you have the opportunity to save money by putting some upfront capital money to allow all of the workers to work in the same place—better protection for the children and, from your government's viewpoint, better use of the money.

I am demanding, Minister, that you do the right thing: fund the Hastings Children's Aid Society so that they can do the right thing efficiently and quickly. Our children should be our number one priority.

JACK BURROWS

Mr AL McDonald (Nipissing): I'd like to speak today about a friend of mine, the mayor of North Bay, Jack Burrows. Last week it was announced that Mayor Burrows has decided to retire and not to seek a fourth term as mayor. I had both the honour and the privilege to

work with Jack while I was a member of the municipal council and in my role as deputy mayor.

Jack Burrows has accomplished many things for the city of North Bay. He has worn many different hats over the years, such as the Rotary Club president, member of the YMCA board, the Nipissing University board, chair of the North Bay Hospital Commission and the North Bay and district health care centre, and he currently serves on the North Bay Hydro commission, the North Bay Police Services Board, the North Bay Economic Development Commission and the Rail Lands Development Committee.

Jack is well known in North Bay for Burrows Country Store and Garden Centre, a business in which he was hands-on until he took a semi-retired role when he became the mayor of the city of North Bay.

It's been said that Jack is truly a prince of a man, a very honest and decent man to work with. I can honestly say that no truer words have been spoken about this individual.

During his years as mayor, he had a vision for North Bay's downtown and waterfront which led him to initiate the purchase of the CP Rail lands, and now the results of that vision are beginning to materialize. His dedication to North Bay has been commendable and he will be greatly missed in office.

He will now have the time to enjoy his retirement and share his free time with his wife, Elaine, and his nine grandchildren. Elaine has always stood by her man, and they form quite a team together. I'm sure he'll even find the time to take in a round of golf or two, one of his favourite hobbies.

On behalf of all MPPs in this Legislature, I want to wish Jack and Elaine the very best for the future.

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): I hope the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is listening.

"Fair Deal Is No Deal for Municipalities," said the press release, and frankly, we in the Liberal caucus couldn't agree more. Cities, AMO, and municipal finance officers have warned that the Eves government referendum proposal, like Proposition 13 in California, will lead to reductions in municipal service levels, infrastructure deterioration, more user fees and debt rating downgrades, but you don't seem to care.

You've received a very reasonable request from the Large Urban Mayors' Caucus for an independent review of municipal finances, but you were quick to reject that

too. You'd rather download costly referenda. It's estimated that in the city of Toronto alone, the cost of a referendum would be almost \$6 million; in Mississauga, almost \$1 million; in the city of London, \$700,000. Who's going to pay for that? The property taxpayers in these communities through more service cuts.

No one seems to have summed it up more clearly than former Toronto mayor and Tory activist David Crombie. At a recent meeting of the Toronto City Summit Alliance, he said, "In the last five or six years, the provincial government has basically humbled and hobbled municipalities. Municipalities don't have a sense they have partners. This government is more interested in gimmicks than in delivering public policy."

Minister Young and Premier Eves are clearly unwilling to listen. I want to reassure our municipal partners that a Dalton McGuinty government will strike a real new deal with you, sharing our tax room, not tying your hands. You deserve better than what Ernie Eves and David Young are offering you.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): A Dalton McGuinty government? That's like Tweedle-Dee and Tweedle-Dumber. My God. Don't want to go there.

Je veux amener l'attention du gouvernement à une situation qui s'établit, j'imagine, pas seulement dans mon comté mais dans d'autres comtés à travers le nord et d'autres parties de la province. C'est une lettre qui a été écrite par M. Richard Boucher, qui écrit :

« Le 26 mai dernier un appel d'urgence a été placé au service 911. Mon petit neveu s'était étouffé en avalant un bonbon et il était en train de s'asphyxier. Sa grand-mère a appelé le 911 pour finalement tomber sur une téléphoniste unilingue... »

C'est-à-dire qu'il y avait des problèmes quand une madame qui ne pouvait pas s'exprimer en anglais a téléphoné le 911 pour dire qu'il y avait une urgence à sa maison et que le jeune était en train de s'étouffer—qu'il y avait un problème.

Je veux dire au gouvernement très clairement que vous avez besoin de comprendre qu'à travers la province il y a beaucoup de francophones, et, comme le savent M. Beaubien et autres, il y a certaines régions de la province où il y a non seulement beaucoup de francophones, mais où les francophones sont unilingues français.

Je vous demande très simplement comme gouvernement de vous assurer d'avoir en place les téléphonistes nécessaires pour être capable de répondre au téléphone quand il y a des urgences en français comme en anglais, parce que très souvent, dans un comté comme Timmins-Baie James et autres, il y a beaucoup de personnes qui parlent seulement le français et non l'anglais.

Je veux dire à M. Boucher à travers cette déclaration qu'on demande au gouvernement de s'assurer qu'on ait le "staff" adéquat pour s'assurer que cette situation-là ne se répète pas et qu'on va surveiller de très près les actions de ce gouvernement.

CRIME PREVENTION

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I rise to report on the recent completion of a series of community crime forums that I was very pleased to host in my home riding of Scarborough Centre.

Once again I want to thank our public safety and security minister, the Honourable Bob Runciman, for consenting to be a special guest. My constituents were pleased he took the time to visit us in Scarborough.

1340

What we learned is that my constituents continue to be concerned about crime in our communities. Plainly and simply, they want their governments to crack down on crime. I agree with them.

My constituents applauded the Premier's announcement in Scarborough that 1,000 new police officers would be hired to increase public safety. This is of course on top of the 1,000 additional police officers who are already on our streets thanks to this government—something, by the way, that the Liberals failed to support. I suspect they would have also applauded recent news from the minister. Especially in light of the Holly Jones tragedy, I too applaud the announcement that \$700,000 is being given to the Toronto Police to keep closer tabs on the city's known sex offenders.

The government is able to make our streets safer in this way because of this government's foresight in creating the Ontario Sex Offender Registry. Too bad I cannot say the same thing about the government in Ottawa, where the Liberals put their summer vacations ahead of creating a national sex offender registry. Shame on them. I suspect, given what I heard at my community crime forums, that my constituents would say the same.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): My comments are for the Minister of Finance and they're about skyrocketing auto insurance premiums. We're ready to sit here all summer, if she wants to do that, to take care of the business of this province.

This is a promise made but not kept. Last August I wrote to the minister and I reminded her that in her 2002 Ernie Eves budget she said, "Mr Speaker, when we were elected in 1995, Ontarians were facing double-digit increases in auto insurance rates—the flawed policies of previous governments. As a result of our 1996 auto insurance reform legislation, rates fell for a number of years. However, the market has changed." Has it ever. She went on to say, "We will address pressures on the system and also consider longer-term solutions to ensure that automobile insurance remains available and affordable to Ontario citizens."

I told her how my auto insurance rates had gone up 47.6%, and they're going to go up another 20% this year. That's neither fair nor is it affordable. What did the minister write back in October? It took her a few months. She said that "increased reinsurance costs resulting from

the events of September 11, 2001" are the reason. "Our government is dedicated to maintaining a fair, balanced and cost-effective auto insurance system." I haven't seen it yet.

BSE

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): I rise today to tell my fellow members of a public meeting I hosted along with my newly elected federal counterpart, Gary Schellenberger, to give farmers of our riding an opportunity to ask questions about BSE, mad cow disease, and tell us their concerns.

We held this meeting in Mitchell at 10 am last Saturday. We had more than 90 farmers, agricultural leaders and others whose businesses have been impacted by the trade ban on beef and cattle. They came to listen to representatives from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, the Ontario Cattlemen's Association and the Ontario Minister of Agriculture and Food, and to tell Mr Schellenberger and me what they need.

First and foremost, they need the border reopened. At the same time they need compensation now. That compensation should be considered disaster relief and not loans, and not be tied to the federal government's agricultural policy framework, the APF. Farmers support Minister Johns's stand against signing the APF. They're afraid any federal compensation will be held hostage, made contingent on the signing of the APF, and they don't want our government to cave in to that tactic.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the individuals who gave up their Saturday morning to speak at this meeting. They are Jim Wheeler, assistant deputy minister in the Ministry of Agriculture and Food; Dr Nina Szpakowski, veterinarian with the CFIA and animal products program network director for Ontario; Dr Dan DeWit, regional veterinarian with the CFIA; as well as Gord Hardy, Middlesex farmer from near Lucan and a member of the Ontario Cattlemen's Association board of directors.

RESIGNATION OF MINISTER

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): Chris Stockwell's semi-resignation raises a lot more questions than it answers. This issue goes right to the heart of Ernie Eves's standards for integrity in his government. We now have confirmation that Ernie Eves has no standards.

It was wrong for Chris Stockwell to funnel expenses through private corporations, where they are hidden from the taxpayer. He should have resigned for that. It was wrong for Chris Stockwell to change his story from one day to the next and hide the truth from taxpayers. He should have resigned for that. But we learned today that Chris Stockwell doesn't have the decency to resign because of his poor judgment and inability to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth. No. He resigned for political reasons, certainly not for ethical reasons.

Why is it that Ernie Eves didn't ask for Chris Stockwell's resignation last week, or even today? Ernie Eves thinks it's OK for a cabinet minister to funnel expenses through a private corporation. Ernie Eves thinks it's OK for a cabinet minister to tell ever-changing stories. Well, Ontario Liberals have news for you, Ernie. It's not OK. We will form a government that has moral and ethical standards. We will have cabinet ministers who have integrity. Chris Stockwell should not be in cabinet, because what he did was wrong. He should never be allowed back.

WIARTON FLY-IN

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I rise in the House today to let my fellow colleagues and their friends know about an upcoming event in my riding called the Wiarton Fly-In.

Warton, home to Canada's foremost weather forecaster, Wiarton Willie, is the gateway to the Bruce Peninsula, with its towering limestone bluffs and the blue waters of Georgian Bay. The fly-in is based on an idea by Brian Reis, a member of the Great War Flying Museum. This is a brand new event landing in Wiarton on August 9.

The Bruce Peninsula Festival of Flight will host a fly-in and a static display of amateur-built vintage aircraft at the Wiarton-Keppel airport. There will be exact full-size replicas of World War I aircraft, and the Canadian Harvard Aircraft Association will have a vintage World War II Harvard on-site, ready to take people for rides.

There will also be a vintage motorcycle show with a special display of the British Ariel motorcycle. For all of you automobile admirers, there is a classic car show presented by the Bluewater Region Antique Car Club and the Owen Sound Classics Car Club. While you are there, take time to enjoy the exhibits at the Gallery of Early Canadian Flight, a museum strictly dedicated to displaying Canada's aviation past.

This is a true celebration of humanity's passion for moving at great speed in great style. Congratulations on the first annual Wiarton Fly-In, and I look forward to many more to come.

VISITORS

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Today we're privileged to have two students of democracy visiting with us. Mr Gordon Albini and his daughter Amanda have travelled down from Hamilton to watch the proceedings in the people's place, and I'm sure all members of the House would like to join in welcoming them.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Also here in this chamber witnessing democracy, if you will, is my good friend Earl Manners, the candidate in Victoria-Haliburton and former head of OSSTF.

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): Thanks to technology, my mother, who is 92 years old, is probably watching this show and also watching democracy in action.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): And a special welcome to all mothers.

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): Monsieur le Président, j'aimerais souhaiter la bienvenue; I would like to welcome two students from my riding who are here today on an educational program. They'll be spending the week. The two students are Amélie Laflèche de l'école Ste-Trinité de Rockland and Melissa Laflèche de l'école St-Paul de Casselman. Bienvenue à Queen's Park.

1350

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

KAWARTHA HIGHLANDS SIGNATURE SITE PARK ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LE PARC DE LA RÉGION CARACTÉRISTIQUE DES HAUTES-TERRES DE KAWARTHA

Mr Eves moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 100, An Act respecting the Kawartha Highlands Signature Site Park / Projet de loi 100, Loi concernant le parc de la région caractéristique des Hautes-Terres de Kawartha.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The Premier for a short statement?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Mr Speaker, I'll give my statement during ministers' statements.

CABINET MINISTERS' AND OPPOSITION LEADERS' EXPENSES REVIEW AND ACCOUNTABILITY STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE L'EXAMEN DES DÉPENSES DES MINISTRES ET DES CHEFS D'UN PARTI DE L'OPPOSITION DE L'OBLIGATION DE RENDRE COMPTE

Mr Duncan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 101, An Act to amend the Cabinet Ministers' and Opposition Leaders' Expenses Review and Accountability Act, 2002 and the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act / Projet de loi 101, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2002 sur l'examen des dépenses des ministres et des chefs d'un parti de l'opposition et

l'obligation de rendre compte et la Loi sur l'accès à l'information et la protection de la vie privée.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): This bill will amend the Cabinet Ministers' and Opposition Leaders' Expenses Review and Accountability act by eliminating the loophole created by the Premier last year by exempting cabinet ministers' expenses paid for by crown corporations and crown agencies.

It will also make requests under freedom of information with respect to cabinet ministers' expenses subject to freedom of information which you excluded last year, and it has cost you one minister already.

The Speaker: The member for Niagara Centre in the rotation.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Niagara Centre has the floor.

CHRIS STOCKWELL ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 CHRIS STOCKWELL

Mr Kormos moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 102, An Act to amend the Election Finances Act / Projet de loi 102, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le financement des élections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. And the worst part is, we're not even into question period yet. This is introduction of bills. I appreciate all the co-operation. The member for Niagara Centre has the floor.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): This bill amends the Election Finances Act to prevent constituency associations from paying the expenses of members of the Legislative Assembly, unless the expenses are incurred during an election period. The short title of the bill is the Chris Stockwell Act.

CONSUMER REPORTING AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES RENSEIGNEMENTS CONCERNANT LE CONSOMMATEUR

Mr Cordiano moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 103, An Act to amend the Consumer Reporting Act / Projet de loi 103, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les renseignements concernant le consommateur.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston): I am forced to reintroduce my private member's bill that

passed second reading as moved by the standing committee on finance and economic affairs but of course died on the order paper when the Legislature was prorogued.

This bill is a very important bill, I believe, for all consumers. It will increase the accountability of credit report agencies to disclose information and to correct mistakes that appear on a person's credit history. It will also provide consumers better access to information that might be used in the reporting of a credit-worthiness statement and it will also ensure that consumers are not penalized every time a report is conducted.

I would also like to thank the many organizations and agencies that have supported this bill, including the Public Interest Advocacy Centre in Ottawa and the newly formed Consumer Federation of Canada.

PIERRE ELLIOTT TRUDEAU
HIGHWAY ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR L'AUTOROUTE
PIERRE ELLIOTT TRUDEAU

Mr Lalonde moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 104, An Act to amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act to name Highway 417 the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Highway / Projet de loi 104, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement des voies publiques et des transports en commun afin de nommer l'autoroute 417 Autoroute Pierre Elliott Trudeau.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): Pierre Elliott Trudeau became a member of Parliament representing the Montreal riding of Mount Royal in 1965 and in 1967 was appointed Minister of Justice. He was Prime Minister from April 20, 1968, until June 4, 1979, and from March 30, 1980, until June 30, 1984.

The commencement and completion of Highway 417 took place during Pierre Elliott Trudeau's tenure as Prime Minister of Canada. During his time in office, Mr Trudeau spent countless hours on Highway 417, travelling to and from his private residence.

TENANT PROTECTION
AMENDMENT ACT
(FAIRNESS IN RENT INCREASES), 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA PROTECTION DES LOCATAIRES
(AUGMENTATIONS ÉQUITABLES
DES LOYERS)

Mr Caplan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 105, An Act to amend the Tenant Protection Act, 1997 to ensure fairness to Ontario's tenants / Projet de loi

105, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la protection des locataires en vue d'assurer un traitement équitable des locataires de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): This bill, if passed, would amend the Tenant Protection Act in two major ways. First, the bill would ensure that rents are not increased beyond the guideline if there are outstanding work orders.

Secondly, and perhaps even more importantly, the bill would ensure that above-guideline rent increases are rolled back if the landlord either ceases to incur the costs that justified the increase—capital repairs or utility costs, for example—or if mutually-agreed-upon increases meet those conditions, so-called costs no longer borne.

This bill will provide some fairness and balance for tenants to ensure that they do not pay for capital improvements, increases in utility costs and other such increases in perpetuity.

This bill is the right step toward building some fairness back into the rental market for tenants in Ontario who have been attacked by all sides from this government, and I look forward to debating it in this Legislature.

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TRANSPARENCY IN PUBLIC
MATTERS ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LA TRANSPARENCE
DES QUESTIONS D'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC

Ms Di Cocco moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 106, An Act to require open meetings for provincial and municipal boards, commissions and other public bodies / Projet de loi 106, Loi exigeant des réunions publiques pour des commissions et conseils provinciaux et municipaux ainsi que d'autres organismes publics.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for short statement?

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): I introduced this same bill in 2001 and 2002. This open meeting act is needed, according to the latest report of the privacy commissioner. The bill requires specific provincial and municipal councils, boards, commissions and other public bodies to hold meetings which are open to the public. The public can only be excluded from meetings of the body when certain specified types of matters are going to be discussed. Minutes of the meetings open to the public have to be made available to the public in a timely fashion and must contain sufficient detail. Section 8 imposes a penalty for failure to comply with the requirements for notice, minutes and rules.

ABOLITION OF THE ONTARIO MUNICIPAL BOARD ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR L'ABOLITION DE LA COMMISSION DES AFFAIRES MUNICIPALES DE L'ONTARIO

Mr Colle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 107, An Act to restore local control over planning by involving citizens and ensuring decisions are made by democratically elected officials / *Projet de loi 107, Loi rétablissant un contrôle local de l'aménagement du territoire par la participation des citoyens et veillant à la prise des décisions par des représentants élus démocratiquement.*

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

The member for short statement?

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): The bill provides that the government of Ontario has a duty to strengthen planning in the province and should exercise that duty by ensuring there is local control over planning decisions and by considering abolishing the Ontario Municipal Board. Too many communities across Ontario have had their rights to be heard on crucial development issues taken away by an unelected, appointed Ontario Municipal Board. This act, if passed, would end the Ontario Municipal Board's monopoly on planning decisions in Ontario.

KEEPING WATER IN PUBLIC HANDS ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 VISANT À MAINTENIR L'EAU DANS LE DOMAINE PUBLIC

Mr Caplan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 108, An Act to prevent the sale of municipally-owned water works / *Projet de loi 108, Loi visant à empêcher la vente de stations de purification de l'eau dont les municipalités sont propriétaires.*

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

The member for short statement?

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): Retaining public ownership of our water utilities is fundamental to protecting our drinking water. This bill evolves from Justice O'Connor's recommendations from the Walkerton inquiry. He said the following:

"In not recommending the sale of municipal water systems to the private sector, my conclusion is based on several considerations: the essentially local character of water services; the natural-monopoly characteristics of the water industry; the importance of maintaining

accountability to local residents; and the historical role of municipalities in this field." This is found in part two, page 323 of his report.

The government has had two major opportunities to act on this warning from the Walkerton report; since they haven't, this bill will do that. However, this bill will not prohibit municipalities from entering into partnerships relating to the construction and operation of their utilities.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

PROVINCIAL PARK

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): It gives me pleasure to rise today to speak about a very important piece of legislation. Ontario is known around the world for its extraordinary natural environment and its beauty. I believe that each generation of Ontarians has an obligation to protect our precious natural assets so they can be passed on to future generations.

In 1999, our government embarked upon the largest expansion of parks and protected areas ever with the launch of Ontario's Living Legacy. Ontario's Living Legacy is creating 378 new parks and protected areas in the province. In addition, Ontario's Living Legacy identified nine signature sites because they exemplify Ontario's unique natural heritage. One of these sites is the Kawartha Highlands.

Today I am pleased to announce that we are keeping the promise we made in this year's throne speech by introducing legislation to protect the Kawartha Highlands signature site. This bill is the culmination of extensive public consultation over the past four years. It builds upon the valuable work done by the Kawartha Highlands local stakeholders' committee.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my colleague Chris Hodgson, the MPP for Haliburton-Victoria-Brock, who has worked hard to create a made-in-the-Kawarthas solution. This will protect and manage the area for future generations. Thank you, Chris.

Four key stakeholder organizations have also worked hard to create a made-in-the-Kawarthas solution and have signed a charter outlining a shared vision for the future of this unique natural environment. As recommended by these organizations, our government will establish the Kawartha Highlands signature site as an operating provincial park.

This bill, if passed, would set the ground rules for the planning and management of the park based on the directions in the stakeholder charter.

I would like to acknowledge some people in the gallery today who are from the organizations that helped make this happen. Thank you to Jim Faught and Monte Hummel from the Partnership for Public Lands; Andy Houser, of the Ontario Federation of Anglers and

Hunters; Rick Meridew, from the Stakeholder Groups of the Kawartha Highlands; Sissy Tanner, from the Local Stakeholder Committee; as well as Kim Dunford, of the local stakeholder groups. I would also like to take a moment to thank Gail Beggs, assistant deputy minister from the Ministry of Natural Resources, and her team for all of their hard work in making this project a reality. Thank you, Gail.

The Kawartha Highlands signature site encompasses more than 36,000 hectares and would be the largest protected area in Ontario south of Algonquin Park. Situated along the southern edge of the Canadian Shield, this relatively undisturbed area features a rugged, rolling landscape of rocky barrens, scenic lakes, sensitive wetlands and dense forests.

This bill, if passed, will protect the ecological integrity of this semi-wilderness area.

Our government is determined to preserve the natural heritage of the Kawartha Highlands while maintaining traditional uses and providing the opportunity for compatible recreational activities.

In addition, this bill would allow private property owners and affected crown land tenants to continue to enjoy free access to their property or lands through an approved road and trail system.

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Finally, the proposed legislation would also establish a management advisory board to provide advice about the planning and management of the park. We intend to appoint a board reflecting the diverse interests of the local and provincial stakeholders and park users.

I am also pleased to announce that our government is planning to invest \$6 million over four years to help build park infrastructures such as roads, signs, boat launches and recreational facilities such as trails and campsites.

By protecting the Kawartha Highlands signature site, we intend to create a living legacy that will be enjoyed by residents and visitors to this part of Ontario for many generations to come. I know all the members share in the ideals of stewardship, and I urge them to join me today in supporting this important legislation to conserve this very special feature of our natural environment.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Responses?

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): It is my pleasure to respond on behalf of Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals. I would first like to read you a letter from our House leader to the acting government House leader which states: "The Liberal caucus is pleased that the government will be introducing the bill this afternoon. We look forward to having the opportunity to assess its content with stakeholders prior to passage. I see no reason why the bill cannot be passed before the end of this session, once review is complete."

This bill has been a long time coming to this House. There was consultation held over the last several years, as has been mentioned—consultation that cost the taxpayers \$500,000 and resulted in the ill-fated Bill 239, introduced the last day before the House rose for Christmas and a bill that managed to incorporate virtually

none of the recommendations of the advisory committee. That was consultation at its worst.

I do compliment the member for Haliburton-Victoria-Brock, who undertook real consultation. It has resulted in a bill that appears to incorporate what all the parties want. What an innovative approach: to truly go out and talk to all of the stakeholders and listen to them. This is a wonderful example that this government could pursue in the short time left.

If I refer back to a statement by the Ministry of Natural Resources for Ontario on August 10, 2000, it says: "Ontario's Living Legacy announced by the Premier in 1999 features the single biggest expansion of parks and protected areas anywhere. It will add 378 new parks and protected areas in Ontario totalling 2.4 million hectares."

With the addition of this new park, the total of new parks created is one—that's one—since it was announced in the year 2000.

For the stakeholders that are here, for the people of Ontario, you have not crossed the last hurdle in making this park work. I would refer you to an excellent document called the 2002 Annual Report of the Provincial Auditor of Ontario. Here's what the auditor has to say, once it becomes a provincial park: "The ministry had management plans in place for only 117 of the 277 provincial parks. Such plans are essential if animal and plant life resources are to be managed and protected." That's the future that this park potentially has with this government.

"The ministry did not have an overall strategy in place to manage species at risk of extinction in the province even though the Endangered Species Act has been in force since 1971." The only species of animal in Ontario that appears to be safe are the animals that are not managed by the Ministry of Natural Resources.

"Although the ministry had identified"—and this isn't me saying this; it is the Provincial Auditor. You need to read the document—"a set of outcomes related to its objectives, it had not defined performance measures to assess the overall effectiveness of the program." They are saying "plans," but they don't know whether they work or not.

"According to the ministry, the majority of the existing capital infrastructure, including buildings, roads, bridges, docks and water distribution systems, is between 20 and 45 years old and is approaching the end...." There's no money going into it to manage it.

We state that "park resources are not adequately protected and that enforcement efforts needed to be improved."

To introduce a bill and pass it is only the very small first step. You have literally a hundred other parks that you're not managing that need to be managed.

"Overall, three quarters of the park superintendents who responded stated that the parks that they are responsible for had not been adequately maintained to ensure that natural resources were protected." If there is no money allocated by you now, where are you going to

get the money for a new park? Let's see some action and not just words.

On moveable assets, the auditor is very clear: "However, many of the parks we visited had not maintained an inventory list since 1998." That means the ministry doesn't even know how many half-tons it owns, let alone how to manage the system.

Certainly the announcement of this park is good news for the people of Ontario, but we need to see some action. When it comes to the Ministry of Natural Resources, this government talks the talk, but the auditor very clearly demonstrates that they don't walk the walk.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): While I welcome the announcement today, I want to remind people across Ontario that what we have here is a government that is trying to rewrite some of its own bad history.

There already was a very good stakeholders' group that presented a report to the government, calling for the creation of this park and setting out the kind of protection that was necessary. In fact, this stakeholders' report was available in the fall of 2001. But what did the government do with that? The current Minister of Natural Resources tried to totally ignore that report, and through his incompetence and his desire to listen to a few of his friends, wanted to turn this very good stakeholders' report into something that was much less than that. He almost would have succeeded but for the activities of a number of local activists, outdoor enthusiasts, environmental groups and, if I may say, New Democrat candidates Earl Manners and Dave Nickle, who were part of that very activist process to make sure this wrong would be righted.

I understand why the Minister of Natural Resources isn't introducing this today, because he was the culprit. He wasted the efforts of those stakeholders, he wasted time and he wasted money. It was necessary for the government to cover its tracks, so a second stakeholder group was brought together and, I say again, I thank Earl Manners, Dave Nickle and those activists who participated.

This is important. New Democrats want to review the legislation. We want to give the stakeholders a chance to review the legislation. And I want to congratulate Mr Hodgson for getting this back on track after the Minister of Natural Resources totally botched the process.

In saying that this is important and that pending a review of the legislation by ourselves and the stakeholders we want to support this process, I also want to point out some other things.

Before the government give themselves a pat on the back, I want them to recognize that over 80% of the lands that have been designated under the Lands for Life process have yet to be regulated. Over 200 so-called Living Legacy sites have not been regulated as parks, and the parks and conservation areas that have been regulated in Ontario are not being fully protected. The privatized parks customer service is abysmal, park infrastructure is deteriorating and most parks have no operating plans or enforcement. The result is that natural features and the

beauty of our parks are being neglected and destroyed by careless people taking advantage of the lack of park protection and enforcement.

While Ontario's park visitor numbers have increased by 60% over the last 15 years, the parks management budget has been slashed by 62% by this government. The MNR staff has been decimated to the point where the ministry simply doesn't have the people to do the job. Since 1995, over 3,000 jobs have been cut in the Ministry of Natural Resources. Lack of management plans for parks in Ontario is the issue. There are plans for only 117 of the 277 provincial parks. This has resulted in the deterioration of the parks, habitat destruction and a lack of information for properly protecting the parks. Customer service standards at parks have become woefully inadequate. The private company that now operates the computer reservation and registration accounting system didn't answer 65% of the phone calls from the auditor; 65% were not answered. The capital infrastructure, including buildings, roads, bridges, docks and water distribution systems, in parks is deteriorating. The majority is now between 20 and 45 years old and is in bad need of replacing.

So I say to the government, it's a good thing you overruled your Minister of Natural Resources, because he had this process headed in exactly the wrong direction. But New Democrats call upon you to start making reinvestments in our provincial parks. Stop the deterioration that's happening.

1420

Hon Mr Eves: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent for second and third reading of this bill today. The opposition House leaders indicate they want the approval of the stakeholders. They're sitting right there and they approve, and they see no reason why this can't proceed today. So perhaps the opposition members would like to explain to us why it can't.

Mr Hampton: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: A number of stakeholders have indicated they have not had a chance to read the legislation. After they've had a chance to read the legislation—

The Speaker: I'm afraid that's not a point of order.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask the Premier if he would agree to use the section of the standing orders that his government put in to refer the bill to committee immediately for a quick review after first reading and immediate passage. Will you refer it to committee?

The Speaker: The Premier has asked for unanimous consent. Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

ORAL QUESTIONS

FORMER MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question today is to the Premier. Chris Stockwell

resigned from cabinet yesterday, apparently of his own accord. We've learned a lot about Mr Stockwell's standards in the last few days, and today I would like to ask you very directly about yours.

Here are three important facts in this matter. Mr Stockwell ran some \$5,000 to \$10,000 of his expenses through OPG. He said that he himself paid for his family's expenses when he in fact did not. Thirdly, he ran those family expenses through his riding association. Mr Stockwell maintains that he did nothing wrong and that he stepped aside because this was becoming a distraction for the government.

Premier, what I'm wondering today is, according to your standards, did Mr Stockwell do anything wrong?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I'm kind of surprised that the leader of the official opposition would stand in the House today and be talking about Minister Stockwell's expenses when Minister Stockwell has done the admirable thing and stepped aside until the Integrity Commissioner rules on his expenses.

There are important issues before the people of Ontario today. There are issues in health care, there are issues in education, there are issues in legislation before this Legislature, such as the seniors' property tax credit, and the honourable member doesn't want to address any of those issues.

Mr McGuinty: I can understand why the Premier doesn't want to talk about this, but I think it's very important. This is now bigger than Chris Stockwell's judgment; it's about your judgment, Premier, and your standards.

To my way of thinking, to be very direct about this, it was wrong to run expenses through OPG, where they're not public. It is wrong to say that you paid for your family expenses when you did not. It is wrong to run some \$25,000 in family expenses through the riding association. To my way of thinking, Premier, you should have fired Chris Stockwell, because what he did was wrong.

So I'm asking you, Premier, how low are your standards if you maintain that what Chris Stockwell did in all three instances was not wrong?

Hon Mr Eves: The honourable leader of the official opposition knows better than perhaps any other member in this Legislature that we changed the rules for the better with respect to expenditures of cabinet ministers, parliamentary assistants and leaders of opposition parties. We now have received the input, as he well knows, from the Integrity Commissioner into what those rules should be. Those rules are incorporated with the advice of the Integrity Commissioner. The Integrity Commissioner, Mr Justice Coulter Osborne—I'm sure the honourable member is not questioning his integrity—is looking at Mr Stockwell's case, as he should be.

My question to the honourable member is very simple: will the leader of the official opposition submit his \$25,002.29 that he paid on junkets to Chicago and Washington, with taxpayers' dollars, to Bill Clinton

image consultants in the United States of America? Does he think that's an appropriate taxpayers' expense? Why is he trying to hold Mr Stockwell to a higher standard than he holds himself?

Mr McGuinty: Your attempt to change the subject is weak. My expenses were public and approved. You cannot fob this matter over to the Integrity Commissioner. It's about you, your judgment and your standards. At what point in time are you, as Premier, going to exercise some leadership, at least some modicum of leadership, and tell your caucus and cabinet ministers that in your government, there are some things that are right and there are some things that are wrong, and what Chris Stockwell did was wrong? When are you going to have the courage, the intestinal fortitude, the conviction to stand up and condemn this minister for what he did as wrong?

Hon Mr Eves: We did do the right thing. We reformed the system. It's going to the Integrity Commissioner, where it should go.

Why won't he come to the House today with clean hands and his certified personal cheque for \$25,002.29 to the taxpayers of Ontario? You took their money, Dalton; pay it back.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): A question to the Premier: three weeks ago, we revealed that your top fundraiser struck a very, very unusual deal with your party's top donor involving millions in taxpayer-backed funds from the Ontario Pension Board. Every time that we have tried to ask you about this deal, you have decided to duck it.

I believe the people of Ontario have a right to know something about the nature of your ethical standards that you set for your caucus, your cabinet and others who work for you.

Don't you think that it was wrong for an individual to have worked simultaneously at both the fundraising wing of your party and the pension board, and do you not think that it's wrong for that very same individual to then change the rules and lend your party's biggest backer tens of millions of dollars?

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Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The Chair of Management Board has answered this question, as indeed the Deputy Minister of Management Board has. What is important is that there are rules and guidelines that are followed and that preferential treatment is not shown.

Now, will the honourable member stand in his place and come to question period with clean hands about expenses and his certified cheque for \$25,002.29 to the taxpayers of Ontario? Yes or no?

Mr McGuinty: Premier, you can run from this but you cannot hide. Here are the facts—I can understand why you don't want to listen to this. Your party's biggest

fundraiser lends your party's biggest donor millions in pension fund dollars. The deal is very, very unusual, not only for the Ontario pension fund but for the pension industry itself. It is so unusual that the Ontario pension fund has never done this kind of deal, neither before nor after this particular one. Mr Weiss, for nine months, worked both as a fundraiser and as a member of the Ontario pension fund.

This has everything to do with your standards that you're setting for your government, your cabinet and your caucus. I may be a little bit old-fashioned about this, but I think your responsibility is to inspire confidence in the people of Ontario. What I want to know is whether you approve of what happened over at the Ontario pension fund and whether you approve of what Chris Stockwell did. I think the people of Ontario are entitled to know where you stand on these issues.

Hon Mr Eves: The Integrity Commissioner will rule on Minister Stockwell's expenditures, as he should. Talk about old-fashioned; whatever happened to paying your own way? Why are you ripping the taxpayers off for \$25,002.29?

Mr McGuinty: Premier, you may not have recognized this, but your caucus and cabinet take their cues from you. What does it say when you as Premier say, "You know what Stockwell did? There's not a damned thing wrong with that. You know what happened over at the Ontario pension fund? There is nothing wrong with that either." You know what it says? It says you lack the moral courage, the conviction, the strength to say in your government that some things are right, some things are wrong, what Stockwell did was wrong, what happened over at the Ontario pension fund was wrong, and you're not going to stand for it. The people of Ontario are entitled some modicum of leadership, some moral courage and some conviction in these matters. When are you going to provide that?

Hon Mr Eves: He talks about my standards. My standards were that despite the fact that I was not required to do so and despite the fact that there was no conflict, I repaid the amount of severance money I was given to the taxpayers of Ontario. You won't pay for your US consultants, Ontario taxpayers' money that you used, and you sit therelike a smug, arrogant person. You took \$25,002.29 of Ontario taxpayers' money and spent it at the Bill Clinton democratic image agency in the United States of America. Did you get the cigar at least to go with it, Dalton?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): New question.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Earlier in the session, the Premier referred to Monica Lewinsky. Now he has referred to—

The Speaker: Just before you continue, if it's going to be a debate, I'm going to get up quickly. Could you explain under what standing orders you are rising, please?

Mr Colle: I think the Premier should withdraw the statement he made about the cigar and Monica Lewinsky in this House.

The Speaker: That is not a point of order.

FORMER MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. The Premier should recognize that smoking cigars is bad for your health.

Premier, if a private hydro company like Northland Power secretly paid for an energy minister's vacation to Europe, most people would call for a criminal investigation, but under your government, when a cabinet minister gets Northland Power to funnel the cash into his riding association, and then the riding association pays for the energy minister's vacation to Europe, you tell us that's OK. But to people across our province, it's not OK. To people across our province, it seems like ministers can be bought.

Premier, what is your response to people across Ontario—

The Speaker: Order. I'm afraid the member is going to have to withdraw the comment that ministers can be bought. You'll have to withdraw.

Mr Hampton: Yes, but people across Ontario see this as wrong. What's your response?

The Speaker: No, you must—

Mr Hampton: I withdraw.

The Speaker: Thank you very much.

Mr Hampton: The people across Ontario see this as wrong. What's your response to them?

Hon Mr Eves: First of all, nobody said it was right or appropriate. The Integrity Commissioner is going to rule on that aspect. Minister Stockwell has asked him to take a look at that as well, and the information has been supplied, as I understand it, to the Integrity Commissioner to comment on.

Mr Hampton: Premier, this is not about the Integrity Commissioner. In fact, looking at the legislation, I don't think the Integrity Commissioner has the capacity to rule on that question. It's really about your integrity and your government's integrity.

The public knows that Bay Street money from private power corporations, from Adams mine developers and from Oak Ridges moraine developers poured into Mr Stockwell's riding association bank account. The public knows the then minister dipped into that account to take his family and friends on a five-star tour of Rome, Paris and Glasgow last year, and Moscow and Helsinki the year before. You seem to be saying that's OK. Premier, I don't think it looks OK, and at the heart of it, I don't think it's OK.

I think there is a solution. We should ban corporate and union contributions to political parties and political candidates. Will you do that, Premier?

Hon Mr Eves: I am interested that the honourable member is following Jean Chrétien's lead in Ottawa and believes the taxpayers should pay for everything, but the way our system works is that individuals, and individuals who lobby corporations or unions, are entitled to donate to election campaigns and to donate to riding associations and individual candidates. If he wants to have a debate whether or not taxpayers should pay 100% of all that, as

opposed to private donations, I'd be happy to engage him in that debate. At least that's an issue of substance.

Mr Hampton: In this case, the money didn't go for political debate; the money didn't go for public discussion of issues. It was pretty transparent. Corporations that wanted certain results from the Minister of Energy and, as he was then, the Minister of the Environment, contributed all kinds of money to the riding association and the minister used that for his personal benefit, to pay for a five-star junket to the capitals of Europe. Now I say to you, that looks very bad to the public out there. That looks as if all you have to do is launder the money through the riding association, and what would otherwise be directly illegal is suddenly, under your terms of reference, allowable. I think to the majority of the people across Ontario this is not OK, and I've pointed out a solution. We should ban corporate and union contributions. We should take the big money out of politics and these kinds of junkets. Do you agree or disagree, Premier?

1440

Hon Mr Eves: I don't agree. I believe the way our system works is that individuals are entitled to contribute to the individual candidate or the party of their choice. I believe that's the appropriate amount. We have discussed in this House, many times over the years, changes to the limits that individuals and corporations or unions can contribute. I'm quite happy to engage him in that discussion.

But no, I don't agree with his statement that taxpayers should pick up 100% of the tab. It's very interesting that he finds himself agreeing with Jean Chrétien, the Prime Minister of Canada, on this issue.

The Speaker: New question, the leader of the third party.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Try Gary Doer.

Mr Hampton: In fact, Premier, I agree with Premier Gary Doer of Manitoba, who I think has it right.

INSURANCE RATES

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My second question is also for the Premier. Ontario drivers are angry and frustrated with the huge increases in the cost of auto insurance. They've also had it with the arbitrary cancellation of their auto and home insurance.

Just today, a self-employed Ottawa resident wrote to me because, for the flimsiest of excuses, the auto insurance company cancelled his auto insurance and his home insurance. That's despite the fact that he has a 20-year clean driving record and no traffic ticket record. The insurance company, as I say, used the flimsiest of excuses, and they say now that if he wants his auto insurance renewed, he'll have to pay a substantially higher rate.

Premier, do you think that's acceptable in the province of Ontario, and what are you going to do about insurance companies that do that very thing?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I'm not going to comment on any individual circumstances obviously. I certainly wouldn't do that without their permission, and I don't believe it's appropriate, unless I know all the facts in any event.

With respect to auto insurance, yes, it is indeed a concern of average Ontarians. The Minister of Finance is bringing forward a proposal with respect to regulation, assisted by her colleague Mr Sampson, and you will see in short order some method of protection of Ontario consumers with respect to auto insurance.

But I must say that since 1996, the average premium in auto insurance in the province has fallen by 12% to date. I wouldn't want to point to the NDP record when they were in power. His colleague sitting to his right certainly knows more than needs to be said about that issue, seeing as how he lost the debate with former Premier Rae with respect to publicly owned auto insurance in the province.

Mr Hampton: I am quite willing to say that I believe Premier Rae made the wrong decision then, and now it's time to make the right decision. The reality you have, Premier, is that for drivers across Ontario, premiums have gone up by over 40% over the last two years. Your finance minister admitted yesterday that what she has in mind will not roll back any of those premium increases. It may moderate them in the years going forward, but it's not going to reduce them.

In Manitoba, Saskatchewan and British Columbia, what they have found is that a not-for-profit public system of auto insurance has provided for a 20% reduction in auto insurance premiums. Why not implement a driver-owned, not-for-profit insurance system in Ontario when we know from experience in other provinces it can reduce premiums by 20%?

Hon Mr Eves: I am rather surprised by the admission here in the House today that while he sat in Bob Rae's cabinet, he actually disagreed with a basic matter of principle of the government. At least the member for Niagara Centre had the intestinal fortitude to stand up and be counted for his beliefs.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Premier. Premier, I want to speak to you as well about the matter of skyrocketing auto insurance rates.

You promised exactly one year ago today, in your 2002 budget, that you would get rates under control. That was your very promise. Auto insurance rates continue to go through the roof, drivers with clean records are seeing double-digit increases, and some people are being refused insurance altogether.

Premier, there's a growing crisis in Ontario. While you sit on your hands, drivers are suffering. Why have you broken your promise? Why have you failed to protect Ontario's drivers?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): We have not. Up to this year, as I just pointed out to the leader of the third party, auto insurance rates in this province since 1996 have fallen, where in fact they have been going up dramatically in other jurisdictions across the country.

The Minister of Finance will be bringing forward, in short order, a proposal of regulations to control auto insurance premiums in Ontario.

It might be interesting to know if the honourable member opposite agrees with his leader colleague in the province of New Brunswick that there should be public auto insurance in the province of Ontario.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, you made a very specific promise. You said you were going to get rates under control. You said that in the budget of 2002. Since then, you have done absolutely nothing. Your commentary here reveals that once more you are out of touch with what ordinary Ontarians are experiencing. Their premiums are going through the roof, and they are looking to you for help.

Yesterday your Minister of Finance said that if it were up to her, these regulations that you've been talking about would be in place by now. That's what she said. I can only presume, then, that the only thing that stands between her and the regulations having force of law is you.

So I'll ask you again: since the budget of 2002, why is it that you have sat on your hands, you've done nothing, while premiums have skyrocketed in the province? Why is it now that you are standing in the way of regulations which presumably will help provide some kind of assistance to Ontario drivers?

Hon Mr Eves: Mr Speaker, he should wait until he sees the package of reforms that the Minister of Finance brings forward and then comment on it. But I'm quite happy to compare Ontario's record in auto insurance premiums with those of a lot of other provinces, and I'm quite happy to compare them with the Liberal record the last time you guys were in power in the province.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): My question today is for the Minister of Public Safety and Security.

Minister, I saw your announcement last week on the new Web site launched by the repeat offender parole enforcement unit, also called the ROPE squad. It is not often that we publicly see or hear about the ROPE squad unless they have made one of their newsworthy captures.

My understanding is that this new Web site will highlight those individuals who are not only criminals but are also in this country illegally.

Minister, can you please inform the members of this House of the work done by the ROPE squad in Ontario and the reason for such a tool?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Public Safety and Security): Thanks to the member for the

question. The ROPE squad has been very busy in keeping our communities safe. To date, they've captured over 230 criminals who are unlawfully at large from correctional facilities.

Unfortunately, because of the federal Liberal government's lax approach to public safety, the ROPE squad has had to expand its mandate. The Eves government has provided money to fund special apprehension teams that focus on those who have immigration warrants against them. We're doing this without any financial help from the people whose policies create these high-risk challenges: the federal Liberal government.

Mr Gill: Thank you, Minister, for that response. I know the funding of our government has gone to create special apprehension teams whose main job is to focus on those types of individuals who are represented on the ROPE Web site. I also know how frustrated our government is by the federal immigration system. Minister, why exactly does our government focus our resources on a federal government problem?

1450

Hon Mr Runciman: Regrettably, the McGuinty Liberals see themselves as apologists for their federal cousins.

We are investing our resources to fix a federal government problem because we care about public safety. We care enough to have Canada's only sex offender registry. We care enough to have Canada's only Office for Victims of Crime. And we care enough to invest Ontario tax dollars in ROPE squads to try to cope with issues like 36,000 individuals ordered out of this country that the federal Liberal government has simply lost track of. We're doing the federal government's dirty work because, unlike them, public safety is a key priority for the Ernie Eves government.

WASTE DISPOSAL

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): That's a hard act to follow, no doubt.

I have a question to the Premier today. Last year during his leadership bid, former Minister of the Environment Chris Stockwell vowed to make Kirkland Lake the waste mecca, as he said, for Toronto garbage, and at every opportunity he continued to promote the Adams mine as a waste solution. On May 26 of this year, he called a secret meeting with Toronto, Peel, Durham and York representatives to discuss garbage problems. He offered no help for Toronto's 2010 zero waste initiative, but he actively pushed the Adams mine at that meeting. A few weeks ago, when I stated in this House that his brother asked for and received a package of information on the Adams mine from Mario Cortellucci, he corrected me to say, "That was my father." When the Adams mine land deal story broke early in April, Chris Hodgson attended an all-day meeting at Cortellucci's office with other Adams investors to deal with this crisis.

Premier, can you assure this House today that no member of your government, in cabinet or in the back-

bench, or any of their immediate family has any interest, direct or indirect, in the Adams mine dump project?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Certainly not to my knowledge.

Mr Ramsay: Ten weeks ago your government was about to sell 2,000 acres of crown land for \$22 an acre to your biggest contributor, Mario Cortellucci, in order to complete the certificate of approval requirements for this dump project. Even though this is almost twice the land required, you were attempting to do this without notice or tender or EBR posting or any First Nations consultation. In fact, the regional MNR manager phoned one of our dump opponents at home to ask him how he found out about this secret land deal when he found out that you initiated a 60-day review of this transaction that has long since expired. Weeks ago the Deputy Premier stated in this House that the government would commit to giving us a status report as to that review.

Premier, is it your intention, as last year with the nursing home rate increase, to wait until the Legislature rises for the summer before you announce this dirty little land deal?

Hon Mr Eves: I'd be happy to look into the undertaking that the Deputy Premier made and find the information for the honourable member as soon as possible.

With respect to the nursing home rate increase, he will know that this government limited increases last year to 3% and this year to 1.16%, which is exactly the same amount that every senior's pension was increased this year, and the same is in effect for next year as well, so out of pocket it will cost seniors nothing.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Ontario is seeing a diversity of new immigrants who find the promise of a better future in our province. Many of these new immigrants are vital in addressing the skilled labour shortages in underserved areas of the province.

In order to maintain our economic strength and prosperity, it is important that we have a plan to attract skilled immigrants and to make sure that they can contribute their skills to society. What is the government doing to train skilled immigrants and help them find jobs?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues): I'm very pleased to have a question from my colleague from Parry Sound-Muskoka. This is an area that our government has been totally committed to, and we have had a plan.

When we first became the government, we realized that nothing had been done about a whole generation of new Canadians who never in fact had a chance to practise their trades and professions. So we began very quickly with programs to assist them—bridging programs—and now we're starting to see the results.

We have committed \$15.5 million over four years to the development of bridge training programs to speed access to the labour market for qualified, internationally trained individuals. Very early in our tenure as government, we authorized WES, the World Education Service's academic credential assessment service, to assist our new immigrants in looking at their secondary and post-secondary education qualifications, from over 180 countries in the world.

Mr Miller: Minister, I'm happy to hear our government offers a variety of opportunities for new immigrants to hone their skills, as well as employ their skills. I know that two government initiatives—Job Connect, which helps prepare immigrants for the job market, as well as our bridge training program, that helps train immigrants to acquire the additional education they need—help new immigrants play a significant role in strengthening the economic prosperity of our province. Could you tell me more about the bridge training program and the Job Connect program?

Interjections.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: I should perhaps ask my critic if she would like to ask the question. She's asked five questions in almost three years. I don't really think this shows interest in this area. We have to ask our own people.

I will also say that in our own book, the next stage is this: the federal government, with regard to our immigrants, should, in fact, be giving opportunities to prospective immigrants to see if they do qualify before they come here. That is a promise we have in *The Road Ahead*. We will ask our new immigrants to get their qualifications accredited before they come here and help them before they come.

What have we done? In September 2003, I say to the Minister of Health, there will be almost 300 internationally trained nurses who have worked so hard to bring their pass rates from 30% to 70%—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, my colleague the member for Timmins-James Bay and I toured northern Ontario. Things are beyond desperate. It's the perfect storm, and it's flattening the north's economy. Skyrocketing hydro rates are killing jobs, and then you've got US actions on softwood lumber. Dubreuil Forest Products cut over 300 jobs. In White River, the sawmill will close its doors on Friday. This Sunday, the people in Wawa are holding a rally to save their town, and they've invited you. Will you come to Wawa this Sunday and explain why your government has abandoned the north?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The member does make a very valid point with respect to hydro rates in Wawa, and indeed, that issue has to be addressed to benefit the people in

Wawa who find themselves in a very extraordinary situation. I would agree with him that action has to be taken to protect those people.

With respect to northern Ontario generally, I hear what he's saying. A lot of those issues he raises, like softwood lumber, he certainly understands are beyond the purview of a provincial government. However, we have been very supportive of the industry, and it's exactly why we declared all of northern Ontario to be a tax incentive zone, to provide incentives for businesses that aren't there now to locate there and provide jobs for northern Ontarians so they can be full participants in the economic benefits of Ontario.

Mr Martin: So I take it that the answer is no, you won't come to the rally on Sunday.

According to Statistics Canada, hydro rates for large users are up 75%. That's about to kill whole towns in the north. Today we learned that you just downgraded your northern development minister to part-time status when these communities need his full attention. We met with the mayors and mill managers in four towns. The message is the same: these communities have no future unless something is done quickly. The people of northern Ontario have been abandoned by you and your Liberal counterparts in Ottawa. Will you do at least one thing: will you cancel the deregulation of hydro that's killing jobs in the north, or do you plan to turn the north into an economic graveyard?

1500

Hon Mr Eves: I have told him we would address the situation in Wawa and we will.

With respect to the economy of northern Ontario, it would be very interesting to know whether the honourable member and his caucus are supportive of the tax incentive zone for all of northern Ontario to stimulate job creation in the north, to benefit people in the north. It's also a little strange that there haven't been any questions about the amount per kilowatt hour that hydro costs in the province this month. For your edification, it is now at 3.89 cents to date this month in Ontario.

FORMER MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Ms Sandra Papatello (Windsor West): My question is for the Premier. Yesterday I asked the Deputy Premier about the review you promised regarding Cam Jackson's expenses. You will remember, that promise was made last fall, but you wouldn't tell us who was doing the review, what the context of that review was or when it would be complete. Yesterday your Deputy Premier said this: "I've been informed that the Premier's office has done a review, and my understanding is that they are presently in discussion with Mr Jackson on this particular subject."

Premier, I'd like to give you an opportunity to report to this House on the results of the review. What was part of that review? Did you in fact set a new standard for your cabinet and your caucus? Please give us that report now.

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): We did in fact change the system, as she knows, the way expenses of cabinet ministers are reviewed. Certainly a lot of individuals, not just the particular minister she refers to, found the pre-existing rules rather ambiguous. That's why we asked for the Integrity Commissioner's input into drafting new rules, and he's agreed graciously to take on that responsibility as we go forward. It's my understanding that the expenses she speaks of are being reviewed by the Integrity Commissioner as well.

Ms Papatello: We know that Mr Jackson billed the taxpayers, for example, \$842 for a meal at Soul of the Vine, and then in that same time frame he billed the riding association \$842 for a meal at Soul of the Vine. There're countless examples of these bills then being run through the riding association.

Did you, as Premier, go through this review to suggest that your cabinet ministers in fact should take those receipts and run them through the riding association? When it's been determined those bills were for a personal nature and therefore taxpayers shouldn't be footing that bill, did you then tell them to put that through your riding association? Are you setting any kind of standard for how these monies are being spent or who should be recouped for that money? You have an opportunity now. We've had several examples where money for apparently personal reasons—these receipts are being put now through the riding association. Are you telling your colleagues this is OK? Have you in fact set any kind of standard?

Hon Mr Eves: She obviously hasn't got the point that a new system has been put in place. We tabled all the expenses of ministers and parliamentary assistants that were under review or request under the freedom of information act all at once. It's the first time any government has ever done that in the history of the province of Ontario. Certainly, when the Liberal government was last in power—we can rhyme off all the names, if you wish, of cabinet ministers who had to resign under David Peterson's regime for conflicts of interest, for misappropriation of funds, for other activities that weren't exactly up to date, but I'm not going to go there.

Suffice it to say that we have set a new standard in the province for the first time. We are quite confident that the Integrity Commissioner, Mr Justice Coulter Osborne, will make appropriate rulings with respect to expenses as we go forward.

BSE

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture and Food. For the life of me I can't understand why the opposition aren't asking about The Road Ahead and the strong economy to remain competitive in this province.

Minister, this past Saturday I hosted a meeting in Mitchell to discuss BSE, mad cow disease. We had more than 90 local farmers, agricultural leaders and business people there to hear from representatives of the Canadian

Food Inspection Agency, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food and the Ontario Cattlemen's Association.

As you are aware, the restrictions imposed by our trading partners are having a significant effect on the numerous farmers and farm-related operations across my riding. Minister, could you please explain what our government's position is on compensation for farmers affected by BSE?

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Agriculture and Food): I'd like to thank the member and congratulate him on his meeting this weekend. I know he pulled almost 100 people out to this meeting. It shows real interest in his community and rural interest from him.

Let me say very clearly that this government is concerned about rural issues. Ernie Eves speaks hard and long about rural issues and how important they are to the economic engine of this province.

We are also speaking to the BSE issue specifically. We are concerned about the people not only in the beef industry but in all of the spinoff industries of the beef industry and how they will make a livelihood with this imposed trade restriction that we have.

On June 6, I wrote to Minister Vanciel and brought to his attention the important things that need to be done by the federal government to provide adequate compensation. As everyone in this House knows, this is a national issue and it demands national attention. So we asked that the federal government fund this with new dollars—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The minister's time is up. We have a supplementary.

Mr Johnson: I'm impressed with the work that you do in your ministry, acting for a strong economy, ensuring the road ahead and what we need to get to where we're going. I know you had planned to attend the meeting in my riding last Saturday but you had to go to Vancouver to meet with your provincial colleagues and the federal Minister of Agriculture, Van something, on Friday to discuss the possible assistance packages to those affected by BSE and related trade restrictions.

Could you tell the farmers in my riding and across Ontario what your position was at that meeting and where we're going from here?

Hon Mrs Johns: Our position is clear. It was laid out in The Road Ahead. It talks very clearly about compensation for the agricultural community in this province.

The Premier wrote a letter to the Prime Minister and asked the federal government to move forward with compensation for this industry. He agreed with the western Premiers that this compensation should be based on a disaster relief program of 90-10, or 90% federal and 10% provincial, as the western Premiers had done, and he suggested that that funding should come immediately because this industry is in crisis.

He also asked that the federal minister work quickly to lift the ban on this industry, because this is providing incredible problems to this industry. He supported the western Premiers. We stood with them, and we expect the federal government to come out immediately—

The Speaker: I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to ask why immigration in The Road Ahead is under the crime part of your—

The Speaker: Order. It's not a point of order.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. You will know that the children's heart surgery program at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario is very, very important to families in eastern Ontario. You will recall that when you originally decided that you were going to shut that down, over 183,000 people signed petitions and many, many thousands took lawn signs. In fact, if you were to drive through the Ottawa area, you would still find lawn signs in support of maintaining that program in our community.

Since you first announced that you would cancel this program, we lost two surgeons, and a couple of weeks ago we lost a third, this one to Texas.

A short while ago, the Premier came to Ottawa and said the matter was under review. I think this matter should be a no-brainer. I think a province of 12 million people deserves to have two centres of excellence when it comes to children's heart surgery, one here in Toronto and one in Ottawa.

Will you now lift the cloud and guarantee to people living in eastern Ontario, families in particular, that you will assure them that they will not lose the children's heart surgery program from the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'm surprised the honourable member hasn't mentioned London in his remarks. It appears that the audience is different here, so he doesn't mention London. When he goes to London, he mentions London, but that's a different issue.

1510

In answer to the question, I can only say to the honourable member that I hope he agrees, as I do, that we should make these decisions based on the best clinical information that will save as many children as possible who have some desperate situations and diseases. I can commit to you that this review is all about ensuring that we act on the best possible clinical information.

Mr McGuinty: Why not just admit that this is not about acquiring further information? This is all about buying some more time until after the election, when you intend to proceed with your unequivocal plans to shut down the children's heart surgery program at CHEO in eastern Ontario. Why not just admit that?

This is nothing more than a cynical ploy. If you were committed, if you understood what was happening in eastern Ontario, if you understood the value of this program to those families, then you would stand up and say that in our province we're going to have at least a

second centre of excellence that will be located in Ottawa. It is already there at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario. Why don't you stand up now, put politics behind and guarantee us that we'll be able to hang on to this program in our community?

Hon Mr Clement: I'm trying to accord the honourable member the respect his office deserves. But when he accuses this side of the House of cynicism on this issue when his activities could smack of the same action, I would only say to the honourable member, let's put aside the issues of accusations and the issues of politics. I'd be happy to include the honourable member in a decision or a review where we look at the very best, most modern information, the best information that is supplied by clinical experts and scientists in the field, to make a decision as a matter of public policy. The honourable member doesn't know a lot about being a Premier if he says no to that.

IMMIGRATION POLICY

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship. The federal Minister of Immigration, Denis Coderre, is on record as saying that Ontario has shown little if any interest in signing a deal to select smaller numbers of immigrants first, as Ottawa has asked it to do. Minister, why has Ontario not signed such a deal?

Hon Carl DeFaria (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors): I thank the hard-working member from Scarborough Centre for the question.

The honourable member is referring to the provincial nominee program. This program gives provinces the ability to nominate a limited number of economic immigrants for entry into Canada. As you know, Ontario receives almost 60% of Canada's immigrants. What Ontario needs is an efficient and effective system for selecting newcomers. Under the provincial nominee program, only 2,000 immigrants came to Canada last year. Compare that to the more than 130,000 immigrants who settle in Ontario each and every year. You see, for Ontario that is a drop in the bucket.

We want the federal government to fix the main selection system. We are not interested in the federal down-loading of its responsibilities through nominee deals. We say to the federal Liberals, either fix it or get out of the way.

Ms Mushinski: I know that immigration is very important to this province. Indeed, I believe it's vital to its future, and Ontario truly deserves a hand in shaping the policies that bring newcomers to our province.

I know, as I'm sure you do, Minister, that members of the Ontario Liberal Party, who are nothing more than apologists of course for the federal government, claim that we are scapegoating immigrants and insulting all Ontarians by supporting a made-in-Ontario immigration policy that's clearly outlined in our great plan, which is called The Road Ahead. Minister, how else has the federal government let down Ontario's newcomers?

Hon Mr DeFaria: One of Mr Coderre's priorities was to encourage immigration to small and medium-sized communities as a further lack of federal Liberal responsibility, if you can say "Liberal responsibility"; that's an oxymoron. They have committed only \$3.8 million over two years to this program. Now Mr Coderre says that it's up to the provinces and municipalities to pay for the bulk of the federal initiative. Well, the government of Ontario is already doing its part. Recently Premier Ernie Eves announced an initiative that increases opportunity for foreign-trained doctors to become licensed to work in underserved communities. Mr Coderre says that immigration is about sharing. Well, we are doing our share; the feds are not.

The good people of Ontario have had enough. Ontario deserves a hand in shaping the policies that bring newcomers—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question is for the Deputy Premier. I don't think the Premier is still here. Is he gone? If he's gone, I'll direct it to the Deputy Premier.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The Deputy Premier can handle it, thank you.

Mr Prue: The question, then, is to the Deputy Premier. Madame Deputy Premier, the trickle-down theory for housing does not work in this province, or anywhere. This is not just the NDP talking. Today TD Economics released a report, *Affordable Housing in Canada: In Search of a New Paradigm*. They say very much the same thing: that tax breaks given to developers don't work. The TD says the same thing the New Democratic Party has been saying for years: to build affordable housing through direct government grants. If you won't listen to the New Democratic Party, will you at least listen to the TD Bank when they're talking about housing?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I appreciate the question, and I refer it to the Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon Tina R. Molinari (Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I am pleased to address the question today. Housing in Ontario has increased, and due to the policies of this government is in a much better state than it has been in the past.

I take great issue with the member across the way for bringing such questions to this House, which really have to do with the increase we've had in affordable housing in this province. We are doing more in the province of Ontario for housing than any other government ever has. We've signed an affordable housing agreement with the federal government.

It took a long time to reach that agreement because the federal government was not co-operating with some of the unique issues in Ontario. Everyone in Canada has had

difficulty reaching an agreement with the federal government.

Mr Prue: Madame Associate Minister, there are 90,000 families in Toronto alone who are on the list for affordable housing. We're not talking about housing for the rich; we're talking about housing for the poor. Former Premier Harris slandered non-profits, and the Chrétien government put them at a disadvantage with this new housing policy. We believe that non-profits work. They know the needs of the community, and they are affordable in the long term. The TD Bank has written, "There is no compelling reason to think that tax breaks would work more effectively than grants targeted at affordable housing."

My question is quite simple: will you do what the TD Bank and the New Democratic Party have suggested and undo the boondoggle of the Harris years, when not one affordable housing unit was built in this province?

Hon Mrs Molinari: When we raise the issue of boondoggles, I want to let the member know that this government knows that hard-working families won't benefit from returning to the social housing boondoggles of the previous Liberal and NDP governments.

Real progress comes from removing the barriers that stand in the way of the private sector building affordable rental units and new homes. That's why this government has invested in effective tools, not costly failures. We've also cut taxes and helped create one million new jobs since taking office. This has played a big role in the booming growth of the housing sector in Ontario. New single-family homes alone have grown by 11% in Ontario. This means more families leaving the rental housing market and pushing vacancy rates up.

1520

IMMIGRATION POLICY

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): My question originally would have been for the Minister of Public Safety, but he has denied coming with me on debate on this immigration issue and told me it was the Minister of Citizenship, so I'm afraid I'll have to ask you the question. Why is the immigration policy under the crime section of your Road Ahead program?

Hon Carl DeFaria (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors): My friend is wrong. The immigration policy in The Road Ahead is under "Safe Communities."

Ontario is a welcoming province. Ontario is the most diverse jurisdiction on the planet, with over 200 cultural communities living side by side raising their families and speaking some 70 or 80 different languages.

Ontario continues to be a land of opportunity. Everywhere I go throughout this great province, I hear from people who arrive in this province, worked hard and built their families here and built their professions and careers. I'm so proud to be the minister responsible for immigration and to interact with all our diverse communities of Ontario.

Mrs Bountrogianni: For the last few weeks, I've been honoured to go to flag-raising ceremonies and other ceremonies for our ethnic communities. You've been proudly there. How do you think they feel when you have their issues under "Safe Communities"? Perhaps you're trying to divert the attention from your sorry record—from the sorry record of the Minister of Public Safety: 10,000 arrest warrants outstanding, according to the Provincial Auditor's 2002 report, many for serious violent offences, not from illegal refugees, not from immigrants.

Four out of five sex offenders are not receiving proper rehabilitation after being released into the community—from the Provincial Auditor's 2002 report—not illegal refugees, not immigrants.

Forty percent of serious offenders being released into the community go unsupervised or unmanaged by the ministry—Provincial Auditor, 2002. Those are the facts you would like the people of Ontario to—

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): Scapegoat.

Mrs Bountrogianni: Thank you. You want to scapegoat the immigrants so that people will be diverted from the real facts—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the member's time is up. Minister?

Interjections.

Hon Mr DeFaria: Do you want to hear the answer?

The Speaker: Order. We'll stop the clock and let you finish.

Interjections.

The Speaker: We've stopped the clock so he can finish and wrap up. Minister?

Hon Mr DeFaria: It is here under "Public Security": the federal government lost connection with 36,000 illegal people and doesn't know where they are. Those are the people under "Public Security."

I'll answer the question of my friend. I know exactly what the diverse communities think. Do you know why? Because I'm there, day in and day out.

Just this weekend I was in eight different communities celebrating Father's Day with people of diverse communities. I know they love our platform; they love our tax credits for seniors; they love our tax deductibility; they just love waving Ontario flags.

Hon Dan Newman (Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: the Premier, in response to an opposition question earlier today regarding the accommodation co-payments in long-term-care facilities, referred to percentages and not dollars. The Premier is asking to correct his record today. He intended to say that this government limited increases last year to \$3.02 and this year to \$1.16, not 3% and 1.16%.

The Speaker: I appreciate it. It's not a point of order. I thought he was correcting his record, but he slipped the Premier in. I apologize; I should have been quicker on my feet. Actually, the table is much quicker and did catch it. I should have listened to them.

Mrs Bountrogianni: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to register my dissatisfaction with the answer of the Minister of Culture, and I would like to submit the proper paperwork.

The Speaker: I thank the member. She will know to file the appropriate papers with the table, and she may do that.

It is time for petitions, and the member for Sudbury. Sorry. Before we start the clock, a point of order.

Hon Mr DeFaria: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: If they want me to answer the question more, I'd love to.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Come to order, please. Question period is over. We're now going to petitions. I would ask all members for their co-operation. We've had our fun for the hour. Now we move on to the next order of business, and it's petitions. The member for Sudbury, who is getting tired, can lead us off—I guess he's not going to lead us off.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe I heard the member for Hamilton East tell my caucus colleague the member for Mississauga East to go back where he came from.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. We're at the stage now where we are going to say something we're all going to regret. The member for Hamilton East, please come to order. We're at the point where somebody is going to say something they'll regret. I ask all members to please cool it.

It is now time for petitions, and the member for Sudbury.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. It might be best if members decide on their own to move out, because we are going to get into something I think we're all going to regret that won't reflect well on any of us. I don't need to remind any of the members that we still have a class sitting up there. You should see the faces of those children—they're young adults—looking at the behaviour down here. I ask all members, please—question period is over. If you need to, and you feel your temperature is up, I would ask you all to please just remove—

Interjections.

The Speaker: That's it. The member for Hamilton East is named and the Minister of Finance is named. Both of you are out. I name both of you: Mr Agostino and Janet Ecker are out. You can go outside and yell at each other for five hours, as far as I'm concerned. You just won't shut up, either of you. I gave you ample warning and I was very reasonable with all of you. But no, you can't do it, you've got to keep yapping, so you'll both be out—disgraceful.

Mr Agostino and Mrs Ecker were escorted from the chamber.

The Speaker: Now we're going to get to the member for Sudbury on petitions.

PETITIONS

HIGHWAY 69

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I'd like to congratulate Bridget, who is from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, on being very patient while she was waiting. Well done, Bridget.

This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas modern highways are economic lifelines for the north; and

"Whereas the stretch of Highway 69 from Sudbury south to Parry Sound is a treacherous road with a trail of death and destruction; and

"Whereas the carnage on Highway 69 has been staggering; and

"Whereas the ... Eves government has shown gross irresponsibility in not four-laning the stretch of Highway 69 between Sudbury and Parry Sound; and

"Whereas immediate action is needed to prevent more needless loss of life; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility of" any "government to provide safe roads for its citizens, and the Eves government has failed to do so;

"Be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to urge the Eves government to begin construction immediately and four-lane Highway 69 between Sudbury and Parry Sound so that the carnage on Death Road North will cease."

Of course, I affix my signature to that petition.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I have hundreds of names of petitioners. It reads: "Petition Against the Continuing Actions of Supervisors in Hamilton-Wentworth, Ottawa-Carleton and Toronto District School Boards.

"To the Ontario Legislature:

"Whereas the government has cut over \$2 billion from public education over the past seven years;

"Whereas the provincial funding formula does not provide sufficient funds for local district school board trustees to meet the needs of students;

"Whereas district school boards around the province have had to cut needed programs and services, including library, music, physical education and special education;

"Whereas the district school boards in Hamilton-Wentworth, Ottawa-Carleton and Toronto refused to make further cuts and were summarily replaced with government-appointed supervisors;

"Whereas these supervisors are undermining classroom education for hundreds of thousands of children;

"We, the undersigned" members "of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, call on the government to restore local democracy by removing the supervisors

in the Hamilton-Wentworth, Ottawa-Carleton and Toronto district school boards.”

I support this petition very strongly

1530

HIGHWAY 518

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition from my riding.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the ministry immediately proceed with the reconstruction of Highway 518 between Highway 69 and Highway 11.

“This highway is in a deplorable condition. Those who have to travel this corridor to their jobs, shopping, medical services etc have been promised by the MTO that this highway would be upgraded to allow for safe and problem-free travel.

“We request the ministry to commence reconstruction as soon as possible.”

I affix my name to this petition in support of it.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Eves government has increased the fees paid by seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities by 15% over three years, or \$3.02 per diem in the first year and \$2 in the second year and \$2 in the third year, effective September 1, 2002; and

“Whereas this increase will cost seniors and our most vulnerable more than \$200 a month after three years; and

“Whereas this increase is above the rent increase guidelines for tenants in the province of Ontario for 2002; and

“Whereas, according to the government’s own funded study, Ontario will still rank last among comparable jurisdictions in the amount of time provided to a resident for nursing and personal care; and

“Whereas the long-term-care funding partnership has been based upon government accepting the responsibility to fund the care and services that residents need; and

“Whereas the government needs to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$750 million over the next three years to raise the level of service for Ontario’s long-term-care residents to those in Saskatchewan back in 1999; and

“Whereas this province has been built by seniors who should be able to live out their lives with dignity, respect and in comfort in this province;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“We demand that Premier Eves reduce the 15% increase over three years in accommodation costs to no more than the cost-of-living increase annually and that

the provincial government provide adequate funding for nursing and personal care to a level that is at least at the average standard for nursing and personal care in those 10 jurisdictions included in the government’s own study.”

I will affix my signature to this petition as I am in full agreement.

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr John O’Toole (Durham): It is my distinct pleasure to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on behalf of my constituents for the riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the province of Ontario has delayed the second phase of the equity in education tax credits for parents who choose to send their children to independent schools; and

“Whereas, prior to the introduction of this tax credit, Ontario parents whose children attended independent schools faced a financial burden of paying taxes to an education system they did not use, plus tuition for the school of their choice; and

“Whereas the equity in education tax credits support parental choice in education and make independent schools more accessible to all Ontario families;

“Therefore, we, the undersigned, respectfully request that the government of Ontario introduce the second phase of the tax credit forthwith and continue—without delay—the previously announced timetable for the introduction of the tax credit over five years.”

I am pleased to endorse this in support of Knox Christian School and other schools in my riding. The parent choice comes first.

HOME CARE

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition concerns the cut in homemaking services in the Manitoulin-Sudbury area by the CCAC.

“Whereas we are outraged by the community care access centre’s decision to cut homemaking services to seniors;

“Therefore, be it resolved that we petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“(1) Provide enough resources to the Manitoulin-Sudbury Community Care Access Centre so that they can provide homemaking services; and

“(2) Instruct Associate Minister Dan Newman to attend a public meeting with MPP Rick Bartolucci to hear stories about what will happen when homemaking services are cut off.”

I affix my signature to this petition, as I did last week and yesterday, and give it to Brittany and ask her to take it to the table.

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr Bob Wood (London West): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the province of Ontario has delayed the second phase of the equity in education tax credit for parents who choose to send their children to independent schools; and

"Whereas prior to the introduction of this tax credit, Ontario parents whose children attended independent schools faced a financial burden of paying taxes to an education system they did not use, plus tuition for the school of their choice; and

"Whereas the equity in education tax credit supports parental choice in education and makes independent schools more accessible to all Ontario families;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully request that the government of Ontario introduce the second phase of the tax credit forthwith and continue—without delay—the previously announced timetable for the introduction of the tax credit over five years."

HOME CARE

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): "Whereas well-managed and adequately funded home health care is a growing need in our community; and

"Whereas the provincial government has frozen community care access centre budgets, which has meant dramatic cuts to service agency funding and services to vulnerable citizens, as well as shortened visits by front-line workers; and

"Whereas these dramatic cuts, combined with the increased complexity of care for those who do qualify for home care, has led to an impossible cost burden to home care agencies; and

"Whereas the wages and benefits received by home care workers employed by home care agencies are well below the wages and benefits of workers doing comparable jobs in institutional settings; and

"Whereas front-line staff are also required to subsidize the home care program in our community by being responsible for paying for their own gas and for vehicle maintenance; and

"Whereas other CCACs and CCAC-funded agencies across the province compensate their staff between 29 cents and 42.7 cents per kilometre; and

"Whereas CCAC-funded agency staff in our own community are paid 26 cents a kilometre, with driving time considered 'hours worked';

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To act now to increase funding to the CCAC of Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington in order for it to adequately fund service agencies so they can fairly compensate front-line workers."

I will affix my significant to this petition as I am in full agreement.

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas the province of Ontario has delayed the second phase of the equity in education tax credit for parents who choose to send their children to independent schools; and

"Whereas prior to the introduction of this tax credit, Ontario parents whose children attended independent schools faced a financial burden of paying taxes to an education system they did not use, plus tuition for the school of their choice; and

"Whereas the equity in education tax credit supports parental choice in education and makes independent schools more accessible to all Ontario families;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully request that the government of Ontario introduce the second phase of the tax credit forthwith and continue—without delay—the previously announced timetable for the introduction of the tax credit over five years."

1540

HIGHWAY 69

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition concerns the four-laning of Highway 69. Speaker, I know it will upset you to hear that that road was again closed near the area you represent, Killarney, once again today.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas modern highways are economic lifelines for the north; and

"Whereas the stretch of Highway 69 from Sudbury south to Parry Sound is a treacherous road with a trail of death and destruction; and

"Whereas the carnage on Highway 69 has been staggering; and

"Whereas the Eves government has shown gross irresponsibility in not four-laning the stretch of Highway 69 between Sudbury and Parry Sound; and

"Whereas immediate action is needed to prevent more needless loss of life; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility of any government to provide safe roads for its citizens, and the Eves government has failed to do so;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to urge the Eves government to begin construction immediately and four-lane Highway 69 between Sudbury and Parry Sound so that the carnage on Death Road North will cease."

Again I give this petition, after I sign it, to Aja to bring to the table.

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It is indeed again my pleasure to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and to present it to the page Caitlyn. What

riding are you from, Caitlyn? Brantford? She will take it to the table when I'm finished.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the province of Ontario has delayed the second phase of the equity in education tax credit for parents who choose to send their children to independent schools; and

"Whereas prior to the introduction of this tax credit, Ontario parents whose children attended independent schools faced the financial burden of paying taxes ... to an education system they did not use, plus tuition for the school of their choice; and

"Whereas the equity in education tax credit supports parental choice in education and makes independent schools more accessible to all Ontario families;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully request that the government of Ontario reintroduce the second phase of the tax credit forthwith and continue—without delay—the previously announced timetable for the introduction of the tax credit over five years."

I'm pleased to endorse this on behalf of Knox school and other Christian schools in my riding of Durham.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I have a petition here addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it states as follows:

"Whereas the Eves government has increased the fees paid by seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities by 15%," and the member from Niagara Falls remembers that quite well, "or \$7.02 per diem, effective August 1, 2002; and

"Whereas this fee increase will cost seniors and our most vulnerable more than \$200 a month; and

"Whereas this increase is 11.1% above the rent increase guidelines for tenants in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the increase in the government's own contribution to raise the level of long-term-care services this year is less than \$2 per resident per day; and

"Whereas, according to the government's own funded study, Ontario ranks last amongst comparable jurisdictions in the amount of time provided to a resident for nursing and personal care; and

"Whereas the long-term-care funding partnership has been based on government accepting the responsibility to fund the care and services that residents need; and

"Whereas government needs to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$750 million over the next three years to raise the level of service for Ontario's long-term-care residents to those in Saskatchewan in 1999; and

"Whereas this province has been built by seniors, who should be able to live out their lives with dignity, respect and in comfort in this province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Demand that Premier Eves reduce his 15% fee increase on seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities and increase provincial government support for nursing and personal care to adequate levels."

I'm handing this petition over to Bridget, one of our pages. I agree with it entirely and have signed it accordingly.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon Brad Clark (Minister of Labour): I move that, pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 53, An Act respecting the equity in education tax credit, when Bill 53 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill, without further debate or amendment, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called on that same day; and

That, when the order for third reading is called, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That the vote on second and third reading may, pursuant to standing order 28(h), be deferred; and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Mr Clark has moved government notice of motion number 53. We split the time evenly. Minister?

Hon Mr Clark: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak today to the time allocation motion on Bill 53, The Right Choices for Equity in Education Act. The Right Choices for Equity in Education Act is so named for two important reasons: first, because it's the right thing to do for the parents of children in independent schools; second, because it's the right thing to do in terms of fulfilling our budget commitments.

When my colleague Finance Minister Janet Ecker introduced the 2003 Ontario budget, she noted that the people of Ontario had delivered one overarching message to her during our government's pre-budget consultations: they wanted the government to stay the course, cutting taxes and continuing investments in priority areas, such as health care, education and strong communities, and on ensuring accountability for the dollars that we spend.

Mr Speaker, let me remind you and the members of the House and the people watching at home what Bill 53 is all about. There's been a great deal of debate and discussion. The bill is entitled The Right Choices for Equity in Education Act. It's all about supporting parental choice. We want to give parents the flexibility to decide whether to send their children to an independent

school. We believe that parents and not government officials or bureaucrats are in the best position to make that particular decision. So we've introduced this tax credit which allows parents that flexibility to make the right decision, the right choice, for their families. Parents may choose an independent school with a particular religious focus, whether it be Christian, Jewish, Muslim or some other denomination. Perhaps it's a school with a particular academic style or educational focus, like Montessori or Waldorf. Whatever parents decide, the important thing is that it is their decision, not ours.

For 2002, the tax credit reimbursed 10% of the first \$7,000 of tuition fees, for a maximum tax credit of \$700 per child, and 10% of the first \$3,500 of tuition fees for a child of kindergarten age, for a maximum tax credit of \$350. If the Legislature passes this bill, the tax credit rate will rise to a maximum of \$1,400 or 20% for the child for 2003, 30% in the year 2004, 40% for 2005, 50% for 2006 and beyond. At the same time, independent schools where parents claim the tax credit will now be required to assess student progress in core areas of reading, writing and mathematics. They will need to ensure that parents and legal guardians are informed of how schools monitor and assess the progress of their children in the core subjects. Independent schools will need to enhance student safety by verifying the status of their instructors with the Ontario College of Teachers and share the results of this verification with parents. They will need to inform parents and guardians where they can find information about consumer protection from the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services.

It's important to point out as well that we have delivered on this important commitment just as we have made the historic investments in public education. Education funding for the upcoming 2003-04 school year will be a record \$15.3 billion. We recognize that education is a top priority for all Ontarians. By 2005-06, multi-year-based funding for school boards will be 14%, or almost \$2 billion higher than the funding level provided in the 2002 budget.

As I've said, education is one of the top priorities for the people of Ontario, and therefore this provincial government has invested wisely in public education. It's been very confusing for members in this House, especially on the government side, to watch the dithering of our opposition members on this particular tax credit.

There has been a lot of discussion about the United Nations and whether or not we're following what the United Nations had recommended. The United Nations at one point had recommended full funding for all denominational schools, but we recognize it is very difficult in this type of society to provide that type of full funding. So we came up with a novel, innovative approach, one that we thought all sides of the House would respect. It's with great interest that I watched to see the opposition, specifically the Liberal Party, try to portray this as somehow fragmenting society.

1550

I'd like to read into the record, if I may, a pastoral letter that was written in 1989—that's quite some time

ago—by the Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops. This is what the bishops of the province of Ontario had to say to their people:

"Our commitment to the best education for all students impels us to respect and support the wishes of parents in other faith communities for religious education in the public school system or for alternative schools which will reflect their values and beliefs. The primacy of parental rights in education is a value which should be realized not only by Catholic parents but also by others. We have publicly committed ourselves to support the concept of the development of alternative schools for people of other faith communities."

The Conference of Catholic Bishops clearly put into the record what their position is for parental choice, for education of this particular description. So when the opposition and specifically the Liberals stand up in their place and rail that somehow we're fragmenting society by doing this, that somehow we're being punitive—

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): Give the whole thing.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Kingston, come to order.

Mr Gerretsen: Very selective.

Hon Mr Clark: The member opposite would suggest that we're being selective; I would suggest that we're not. As a matter of fact, from your own opposition platform, you stated that you believe in free votes. Then I'd suggest that the member for Vaughan-King-Aurora, the member for St Paul's and the member for York Centre might want to exercise that free vote and vote for the education tax credit, since they actually believe in it and have actually stated that on the public record. However, the leader of the loyal opposition has whipped that whip, and they will, in fact, be voting with the opposition opposing it, even though their principles and values state that they support this particular proposal.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Clark: The member opposite is obviously a little bit annoyed that we're taking issue with what they've been saying in the House.

One of the other things they've been doing is they've been stating in this House that we're going to suck money out of the public education system.

Mr Gerretsen: You are.

Hon Mr Clark: The member just said, "You are." So they're admitting that that's what their allegation is.

It couldn't be further from the truth. As a matter of fact, we have proven that we've injected \$2 billion into the education system, an additional \$2 billion, and we have not taken money away from the public education system for the tax credits.

I find it awfully striking that opposition members would oppose tax credits for education, and yet tax credits for education are not new to the government of Canada or to the government of Ontario. Tax credits for education have been around for quite some time. When you go to university or college, you supply receipts to the government at the end of the year for your income tax.

You get a tax credit for that. This is not an unusual item; it's actually quite commonplace. What we've done is simply made it more innovative and provided it for private schools.

I'd like to read into the record a media release of May 10, 2001. For those who are watching at home and are curious as to who's actually telling the truth about this education tax credit—they have that curiosity because they've heard both sides of the equation; they want to know who's actually telling the truth—we are telling the truth. We are telling the people at home exactly what this is all about. I have in my hand a press release dated May 10, 2001:

"The Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops commends the Ontario government for having taken a first initiative to support parents who for conscientious reasons choose to send their children to faith-based independent schools.

"The OCCB has long been in support of parental choice in such matters. Ontario is now a very diverse community. Parents with a sincere desire to educate their children in their faith tradition deserve to be supported in what is often a difficult task.

"At the same time OCCB appreciates the continued support of the government for the publicly funded systems of the province with their own diversity of faith" and "language."

I wonder, would the leader of the loyal opposition, would the Liberal Party or the NDP accuse the Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops of trying to fragment society? The Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops have stated very clearly that they believe this is the right thing to do, that it's about equity, it's about fairness, it's about compassion and it's about principled values of parental choice. Since the Liberal Party and the province of Ontario have in their platforms parental choice, since the Liberal Party has in their platform free votes, one would suggest that there should be at least one, two or three brave souls on the other side of the House who will rise with the government and actually support us.

I have before me quotations from the member for St Paul's, Michael Bryant. Michael Bryant stated on May 12, 2001—you'll like this now. You've heard this before, but I'm going to give it to you one more time—"I can't suck and blow on this (the tax credit). I've got to support this. It's a step in the direction of equity."

Clearly, Mr Bryant agrees with the Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops. This is a step in the right direction. Opening line: they commend "the Ontario government for having taken a first initiative to support parents who for conscientious reasons choose to send their children to faith-based"—

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): You're torquing it.

Hon Mr Clark: This is not torquing it. Would you like to read it? Or perhaps you'd like to call the Conference of Catholic Bishops and ask them. They stated that very clearly and emphatically. They made that very clear.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): He read it verbatim.

Hon Mr Clark: I read it verbatim. You're happy to have this. It's on their Web site. By all means look it up.

For those of you over there who are accusing the government of Ontario of somehow trying to fragment society, of somehow trying to polarize society, of placing one religion against another—we've heard these allegations for the last couple of days in this House—I'd like them to say that to the Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops. When the OCCB stated very clearly that they believe this is the right thing to do, I'd like to know how any member in the opposition can somehow slander this government and state that we're trying to fragment society, when clearly we're offering equity, when clearly we're offering an opportunity for compassionate opportunities for education in the schooling system.

Monte Kwinter, November 16, 1999: "I now call on the government of Ontario to respond in a positive way to this United Nations human rights committee ruling." To Monte Kwinter: we have. The United Nations made that ruling. We looked at that ruling and we said, "You know what? We can't afford to provide full funding for every single school system, every single denomination in Ontario." My colleagues over there would agree that would be an onerous task at best. So we came up with an innovative plan of tax credits, an innovative plan that clearly is supported not only by the Muslim community, the Jewish community and many other denominations, but the Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops supports it. They put it in a press release. There cannot be a clearer indication of support from the Catholic church.

Mr Maves: Read Monte's other quote.

Hon Mr Clark: Monte's other quote. Point it out for me. Here's another quote, June 8, 2001, so this is clearly sooner: "I've always supported it. As a matter of fact, I advocated it for 16 years." For 16 years, the member for York Centre has advocated for this. "We had 5,000 people in support of the position that there is a real issue of discrimination."

It's unfortunate that the leader of the loyal opposition has torqued this issue, has twisted it in such a manner that he's now convinced his entire caucus, including principled men of integrity: the members for York Centre, St Paul's and Vaughan-King-Aurora who believe this tax credit makes sense. If they had the right to a free vote, they would be rising in this House with their conscience, with their integrity, with their values and voting with the government. This is about equity. This is about fairness. This is about democracy. This is about doing what is right.

So often we've heard the lectures and the preaching from the other side. This is about doing what is right for the province of Ontario. I will wholeheartedly support this, and I will support the time allocation.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): It is a pleasure to again rise on this bill. This is the limited debate. This is the measure of the courage of the government and its conviction of what it's doing today that they would permit only three days of debate. Yet it affects every single student in this province, this alien concept,

this policy that does not exist in any Canadian jurisdiction, that is only to be found in a few US cities—a voucher, a tax credit of public money going to private schools.

We see that the members opposite here glory in this particular initiative. They finally get the chance to be the kind of Tory party they really are, the kind that has stripped down and undermined public education. That's been their hallmark. That's been their success. What they've managed to do actually bears marking, because over the last seven years this government has managed to grow private school enrolment by 50%. They've managed to increase that enrolment manyfold over what it was under previous governments. And they have managed to squish down the growth in enrolment in the public schools by half. Now 37,000 students, one in every four new students, under the Conservative government, under this government, goes to a private school, compared to one in 16 under the NDP and one in 25 under the Liberals. This is the government's salient success: one in four students choosing to go to private schools and now getting paid government dollars for it.

1600

Mr Bob Wood (London West): What's wrong with that?

Mr Kennedy: The member from London West asks, "What's wrong with that?" He agrees wholeheartedly with the idea that this is the priority use. The best use of public dollars, for the member, is to see schools that already charge tuition of \$33,000, which is what they're charging at Albert College, be able now to charge \$35,000. That's what the member glories in. That's what he thinks is a good use of public money. He wants to put those public dollars into those high-end schools.

Would it be that Albert College was alone, but it isn't. In fact, Appleby College is going from \$35,100 to \$36,850, an increase of \$1,750, of which \$1,400 comes from you. It is a gift from this government: \$1,400 in a tax credit coming from the Progressive Conservatives of Ontario. That's where they think our dollars should go. Meanwhile, we can't fully provide English as second language in our schools. They cut it back. It takes five to seven years to acquire another language. This economy needs to grow with immigrants who know how to be part of society and are rewarded for learning the language. Instead, they cut back the money. We're missing those dollars, and now we know where they're going. They're going to Albert College, Appleby College and Ashbury College, who already have \$30,000 a year to spend on students. And they would deny a few hundred dollars more to public students.

We know why there's a closure debate here today. We know why these guys don't have the courage of this particular bill: because they want to hide it. They won't stand up in their communities and defend how they are undermining their public students. And make no mistake, that's what they're doing. They don't even have the courage to do what their own independent report said. It said to each one of you, "You're shortchanging the

students in your communities. You're cutting the money away from them. You've taken dollars from them and used them for other purposes."

In fact, all they have managed to do, after all the pressure, all the crumbling schools and all the difficulties that students have had achieving, is to promise—and we know what that promise might be worth—to put back into public education only 31% of what was asked of them. They have failed the Rozanski test. They have failed it miserably in every single community in this province.

Take the two together, because you have to. It adds up to the coherency, the education policy that every parent in this province now fears, which is that their child will not have the chance to go forward based on their ability and based on their willingness to work hard. That's the changing face of Ontario that these people would engineer with their backhanded bill here today.

Well, this party will do differently. We will cancel this tax credit the minute we get into power, and we will see those funds available to improve the public system.

It is no accident that we see these things coming together at this time. On the one hand is a government unwilling to do the things that Dr Rozanski said should happen in schools; not willing, for example, to provide the money for music teachers or smaller class sizes, which children desperately need, for phys ed, for services that are being stripped out of our public schools. No dollars for English as a second language. Even though they were told point blank that we now know that children in our schools coming from backgrounds in poverty will do better if we deal with that set of issues early on in their lives, right now, as we speak, their appointed board in Toronto is cutting away all-day JK. The money that Dr Rozanski, their hand-picked, independent person—as mild an indictment as you're going to get from their own person was, "You have to put \$50 million in there."

How much money is available for kids living in poverty to do better in school under these Conservatives? Not one dime. They're sending it instead to Havergal College, which is going to increase their tuition by \$950, taking up all of the increase of the \$700 that's available. It's going to Rosseau Lake College in Rosseau, Ontario. Their tuition was \$28,650 last year; next year it will be \$30,900. So \$1,400 of that \$2,250 increase is coming as a gift from the Conservatives, because that's the kind of government they run. They don't do the things that are needed.

As everyone who represents an Ontario community knows, Dr Rozanski said, "Crumbling schools have to be dealt with." Do you know how much of a liability this slipshod, lazy government has built up in our schools' infrastructure? Some \$5.6 billion. How much, then, has this government rushed, falling all over themselves, to put back into making these schools safe again, making them places where parents want to send their kids and know they'll be safe and secure? Not one dime. Not one cent of the \$200 million annually that Dr Rozanski said

had to be put in those schools, had to start next fall, has been committed by this government. It's too busy giving the Toronto French School the ability to raise their tuition from \$16,900 to \$17,750—an \$850 increase, all of it paid for, courtesy of the Conservative Party of Ontario. It's an election-style gift at the direct expense of the people in public schools.

I would say also that when we touch on the lack of gumption, the laziness, the absolute inappropriateness of this closure motion today, we only need to look where this government has looked time after time. If they would just get themselves out of the Republican used-goods bin and spend some time looking more broadly at what happens in the States, they'd find out that last year there were 25 measures put forward in state Legislatures to promote tax credits and, yes, with more courageous people who call them vouchers, for what they are. That's what these are: vouchers. These are Tory vouchers. Twenty-five of those proposals hit state Legislatures last year; 25 of them failed because they were subject to public debate. When they went on the ballot in California and in Oregon, they got defeated. If you give this issue to the public, they'll treat it with the respect it deserves.

This is a diversion by the ideologues in the government seeking votes and, along the way, exploiting religious objectors around the province. They know, the members opposite know—if they don't, then they've been hornswoggled by their own minister and their own government—that 75% of the money of this tax credit is going to secular private schools, not religious schools. They know that's where it's going.

As the list that we've had circulated now demonstrates, it's not even going to the parents. They can't even make that argument. Instead, it's going to Lakefield College School to enable them to increase their tuition from \$35,310 to \$37,075—a \$1,765 increase, almost all of it paid for by the Conservatives of Ontario, who can't bring themselves to pay for the textbooks, the smaller class sizes, the assistance to kids in poverty, to do the things that need to be done by a government that took them away in the first place.

This is a government that doesn't know, has yet to understand, the meaning of responsibility, that can't bring itself to stand responsibly even for this legislation that is subjecting the closure motion, or indeed for any of the outcomes of the policies that it brings in front of us.

We have in front of us today a small chance, an opportunity to alert the people of this province that this is about a fight for public education, the kind of which we've never seen before. This measure, this tacked-on, artificial inducement that this government would give away—tax dollars, some \$500 million in tax dollars—to private schools to allow them to pad their tuitions is about more than that. At root, this has the ability, unfortunately, to tear down public schools all across the province.

Let's look at the record. This government has lost us a net 115 schools. No other government has done that. In the last two administrations there were a net 150 schools

built over the ones that were closed. They closed 400 public schools but they have gained somewhere else. They've lost as a net 115 public schools but they've gained elsewhere: 225 private schools have opened under this government, 40 under the last year alone, a doubling of the opening of private schools in the first year of this misguided tax credit.

If the government had the gumption, they'd stand up and talk about their success in undermining public education and in driving kids away. Those 37,000 kids they managed to chase into private schools represent a loss to every community. It means an accelerated shut-down of public schools. There are rural schools that have been closed because this government has undermined the confidence that some parents have and they've put them on the provincial closing policy list again and again. Those discouraged parents, some of whom have headed into these private schools, don't want to be there. Special-needs parents, for example, paying \$12,000: I read about Miss Diane Allen, who had taken out a second mortgage to pay \$12,000 a year for her child because this government took away the special-needs funding.

We see a clear distinction, a clear choice shaping up for Ontarians: a poorly thought-out tax credit with no conditions, meant to foster private, exclusive education; or excellence in public education—that's where the Ontario Liberals will be right now, that's where we'll be at the time of the election and that's where we'll be if we form the next government, based on bringing excellence to public schools.

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Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): It's a pleasure, on behalf of New Democrats, to speak against this closure motion, a pleasure to beat up on and berate the Conservative government on a regular basis, and I do so on behalf of so many Ontarians who would love to have the opportunity to be here and do the same but can't. Through me vicariously, many of you hopefully will enjoy the kind of beating we give, so that you can see that from time to time there are members who can do that on your behalf and do it well.

New Democrats are unequivocally opposed, not just to this closure motion as we always are, but to this bill that they call "right choices for equity in education." New Democrats have always been unequivocal: you will never find a quote from any New Democratic member in this House that in any way shows ambivalence toward the issue of funding private schools, be they denominational or non-denominational. You will not find one New Democrat who will do that. You will find many Liberals, however, who have equivocated on this matter, and you've heard quotes from many of them—you've heard them from me and you've heard them from others. I don't want to berate the Liberals, as I sometimes do, because the real focus today is the government.

Mrs Dombrowsky: What does Nellie say?

Mr Marchese: Nellie Pedro? I don't know what she says. I'm looking forward to it.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: I'm looking forward, Marie Bountrogianni, to facing your friend Nellie Pedro in the next election. You just can't understand the relish I have; in fact, I salivate at the thought.

Interjection: So does she.

The Acting Speaker: Through the Speaker, please.

Mr Marchese: Speaker, through you, I'll read the quotes again, because clearly the Liberals want me to.

"Gerard Kennedy, Liberal education critic"—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr Marchese: In 2001, Marie Bountrogianni.

"[Gerard Kennedy] contends that funding for religious schools doesn't necessarily mean less money for the public system. Both can be accommodated, he says. How? 'We don't have the answer to that at this time'"—Monsieur Kennedy, the member you just heard, for those of you watching, speaking on funding for private schools in NOW magazine in 2001.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): That's denominational schools. There's a difference.

Mr Marchese: Is there a difference?

Mrs McLeod: Yes.

Mr Marchese: The Liberals will claim that defending private schools as it relates to religious schools is OK because that's different.

Mr Gerretsen: No.

Mr Marchese: That's not OK?

Mr Gerretsen: They're different from non-denominational schools.

Mr Marchese: Are they different?

Mr Gerretsen: Yes.

Mr Marchese: The Liberals claim that private non-denominational schools are different from religious schools. A wonderful deduction you make; brilliant logic. By that, do you mean that if we fund religious schools, that's OK by you?

Mr Gerretsen: I didn't say that.

Mr Marchese: What are you saying?

Mr Gerretsen: They're different circumstances.

Mr Marchese: They're different circumstances, the member from Kingston and the Islands says. I'm not quite sure what circumstances he is referring to. Either he is confused or he's attempting to confuse, but it is a typically Liberal slithering, reptilian kind of position that attempts to have it either way.

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): What does Nellie say?

Mr Marchese: Nellie will have an opportunity to have her say. But I hear the Liberals and I enjoy it. I'm so happy they're engaged in the debate. My attack was going to be on the Tories, but when the Liberals engage, I love that kind of debate too, because the member from Kingston and the Islands—and others; perhaps I could name names—just said he makes a distinction between denominational, religious schools versus non-denominational.

So when I read Monsieur Kennedy, your education critic, who "contends that funding for religious schools

doesn't necessarily mean less money for the public system," which is what they're doing and funding, "Both can be accommodated," but he doesn't have the answer as to how they're going to accommodate them financially—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Then I ask the member for Kingston and the Islands, what is he saying? I am curious to know the logic of that kind of thinking. Tories are funding both religious schools, which are denominational, and non-denominational schools such as Upper Canada College; one religious, one not religious, but they're funding both. By way of these quotations that I read to you from the various Liberal members, I'm not sure what the Liberals support. Monte Kwinter said, "I've always supported full funding for faith-based schools.... There should be some recognition in the" provincial "tax regime. I'm personally delighted that that's happened." That's Monte; and that's the member for Kingston and the Islands and the member for Sudbury agreeing.

Mrs McLeod: Do you have any of my quotes, Rosario?

Mr Marchese: Yours? I wish I could find it. How many Liberal members do I need to quote before you, taxpayers, and you, citizens, get the impression that they are somewhat ambivalent, possibly confused, and they don't know what to do? Michael Bryant, my buddy close to me, said, "I can't suck and blow on this" tax credit. "I've got to support this. It's a step in the direction of equity." How many Liberals do we need to quote before you, citizens, get the impression that the Liberals perhaps have a reptilian position, perhaps unrecognizable? But what is clear to me is that it is not a clear position. What is clear to me is that they are as confused as—they don't want to be. But they are trying to say, "Yes, in 2001, many of our members said what they said, but they're no longer saying it." That I understand, but say that. Say, "In 2001, four, five or six of our members said what they wanted to say, but they're no longer saying it, and that's OK, because we're Liberals and we can say whatever we want to say, and we can change our minds whenever." That's OK, but say that. I don't have any problems with that. I have no problems with the serpentine positions that you take as long as you say it. New Democrats are unequivocal.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Yeah, right.

Mr Marchese: The member for Sudbury laughs jovially, because he's a jovial man. He says, "Yeah, right." But I defy the jovial man from Sudbury to find a quote from any New Democrat that is similar to the quotes that I read by Michael Bryant, Monsieur Kennedy and Monsieur Kwinter, including their leader. I defy the jovial fellow from Sudbury to find a quote from any New Democrat here that supports private schools, Monsieur member for Sudbury.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Oh, member for Sudbury. You might want to take us back to the days of Peterson, who through his regulatory measures was going to control the auto

insurance rates. I am sure now, member for Sudbury, with your leader you can introduce another regulatory regime to control it.

I tell you this, jovial fellow from Sudbury: New Democrats support public auto insurance. Many of the members who are in this place today opposed the move to go the way we said we should. While it is true that our Premier at the time was worried about the recession and 15,000 people being laid off as a result of the move that we were interested in, while he had those reservations, many of us who are here today calling for public auto insurance were saying to him, "In spite of those concerns you have, Premier Bob, we need to go ahead." We here are committed to a public auto insurance plan that will, I tell you, fix skyrocketing insurance rates. The Liberals can only say to the Tories, "Fix it." They know Tories can't regulate it. The Liberals can't regulate this beast. No one can regulate that beast except public auto insurance.

Mrs Dombrowsky: What did you do in government?
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Mr Marchese: I just explained it. Have you been sleeping or what? Where are you from? Let me check you out and see what riding you're from. She is from Hastings-Frontenac. My goodness, I was just telling you the story. Do you want me to repeat it?

Mrs Dombrowsky: No. You did nothing.

Mr Marchese: If I have to repeat it, then we've got a problem. How many things can one repeat here when we're talking about what the Liberals are saying or doing? Citizens, New Democrats are unequivocal on this matter. Liberals take reptilian positions regularly. You will never know where they stand. The reason why you will never know where they stand is because they will change their positions on a regular basis and not cringe when doing so, because that's in their nature. It is in the nature of Liberal politics to vacillate, here and hither—daily, weekly, monthly, yearly—and not one ounce of feeling bad about their change of position from day to day. I'm tired of the Liberals. I need to focus on the Tories. Liberals exhaust me.

Mr Gerretsen: We're tired of you.

Mr Marchese: I'm sure you are, member for Kingston and the Islands. You will get your opportunity to have your say. When you, member for Kingston and the Islands, get to have your say, you can comment on what your leader has said on this matter and you can comment on what the other members have said on this matter, because I would be pleased to hear your answer. I know you will divert, you will skirt away, you will hide, you will skulk, but you will never address what is in your nature as a Liberal, and that is to continually vacillate on positions as soon as the issues get hot—just like hydro. You supported the sell-off of Hydro One, you supported the sell-off of hydro generation, and when things get hot, all of a sudden your leader stands up and says, "Oh, no, we're opposed too, like New Democrats. We're opposed to that." It's in your nature. As soon as things get hot, you switch your position, and that's OK. That's why you

guys tire me. You are such a difficult moving target to pin down. You are like water to hold. You are like jelly to hold. Please.

Back to the Tories. The government has been able to find to date 120 million bucks. Yesterday the member from Scarborough Centre said, "The money won't be coming out of public schools." A curious thought. Where would the money be coming from, member from Scarborough Centre? Out of the blue, like manna from heaven, like some alchemist will simply produce money out of the blue? To date, 120 million bucks. Where is it coming from? Additional income taxes?

SARS has put a damper on our economy a little bit. We have less money than we did before. The American economy has slowed down a bit and we are exporting less to the US. We don't have as much money as we did before, but we found \$120 million for private schools.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Where is it coming from, Bob Wood?

Mr Wood: Revenues are up.

Mr Marchese: Ah, revenues are up. We give away corporate tax cuts. We give away more in individual income tax cuts. Where's that money going? How much money is coming in? How much money is going out? What are we going to cut next?

I tell you, citizens, should this government be re-elected, we would be very, very broke. This government would have to find a whole lot of money from some source to pay for these promises, to pay for these private tax credits, to pay for the corporate tax cuts, to pay for the individual income tax cuts that are going to wealthy people who are sending their kids to Upper Canada College. Bob Wood wants to send my money to parents who can afford to send their kids to Upper Canada College, where the tuition fees are 16,000 bucks a year. His income tax cuts that will go to parents who send their kids to Havergal, just up the street at Lawrence and Avenue Road, where the tuition fees are \$20,000 a pop; his tax cuts, this tax credit, to serve the needs of these high-income parents who are able to pay tuition fees for kids whose total tuition fee yearly is a yearly salary for someone earning \$6.85 an hour, literally. Someone earning \$6.85 an hour, citizens, is barely earning close to what one person has to pay by way of tuition fees to send their kids to Havergal, and Bob Wood wants to send my money and yours to subsidize these parents because they're needy.

I don't want to send my money to them, but that's where the money's going. The money's coming from somewhere and the money doesn't grow on trees. It's coming out of somewhere, and they're stealing it from our public system to send it to the private system so that rich parents can send their kids to Havergal—\$20,000 a year for one kid. Maybe they have two kids—\$40,000. Maybe they have three children. Havergal, an old girls' school up the street—maybe they have three kids—60,000 bucks. Good heavens—\$20,000, \$40,000, \$60,000 for tuition fees, and the member from London West and the member from Perth-Middlesex think that's

OK? You call that flexibility? You call that parental choice?

Do they send the poor kids from your riding to these kinds of rich schools where they've got to pay \$20,000 a year?

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: The member from Northumberland, I couldn't hear you.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: You want to be part of whom?

These are private schools. These parents send their kids to private schools so as to avoid their kids mixing with our kids who are in a public system. They choose to send them to a private system so that they do not mix with our kids in the public system. They want a private system so as to make sure that when their kids grow up and marry, they're going to marry someone of their own kind. I'm not talking religion here; I'm talking money kind. That's what that's about. It's a private club. Havergal is a private club. Upper Canada College is a private club, sorry. That's why rich parents send their kids there.

That's what this tax credit does. It sends your money and mine so that we can subsidize poor rich parents who are paying 16,000 to 20,000 bucks a year to send their kids to private schools. It's nuts. You've got to understand that. You, taxpayers, must agree with me that it's a nutty idea for this government to send your money away, \$120 million away, this year to subsidize rich parents. Oh, they're not subsidizing these schools, the private schools, no. They're subsidizing parents. "Oh, but that's OK, because we're subsidizing choice." Oh? Rich parents get to have my money so they can have more choice that they don't already have? Someone who is sending their kids to a private school doesn't need my help to make that choice. They make that choice with or without you. They don't want your money, but you are giving away my money. They're rich and they don't need your money, but you're giving away our money, their money.

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When someone earning \$6.85 an hour, the minimum wage, because you, the government, says, "They're earning too much; \$6.85 is too much; we can't raise it"—for eight years the minimum wage has stayed at \$6.85 an hour. They barely make 20,000 bucks a year, but some rich person can send their kids to Havergal for 20,000 bucks. It's kind of funny, isn't it, member for Perth-Middlesex?

Interjection: It's sad.

Mr Marchese: But it's sad. It's pitifully sad.

Then you have the member from Niagara Centre, who said yesterday, "The great equalizer is not public education, it's education," by which he meant that if parents send their kids to a private school, that's part of the equalization, part of what creates equality, presumably, among all children, I guess. Sorry, 95% of our kids go to public schools; 5% do not. The great equalizer is our public system. That's where we need to put our resources, not private schools.

Is it a level playing field when a wealthy child is educated at a private school, with ample resources both at home and in their schools, because they're not short of much? Is it a level playing field when these kids have so much and yet so many of our poor inner-city schools have so little, lacking text books, having fewer librarians than ever before—I'll get to the list in a moment—having fewer music teachers than ever before?

We have a situation here in the city of Toronto where the supervisor, your marionette, who controls the Toronto board of education has determined that nine inner-city full-time senior kindergartens would be closed. Do you believe that Mr Christie, your supervisor, the marionette you control autocratically from this place, is giving us the equity we are looking for? Is education the great equalizer when you have Christie taking away from our inner-city schools nine full-time senior kindergartens? I don't think so, member from Niagara Centre. I don't think so at all.

Public education is the great equalizer when we put back resources, not take them away from it.

Mr Maves: You've still got it wrong. Education is the equalizer.

Mr Marchese: The member from Niagara Centre just joined us and he says that education is the great equalizer. I agree.

Mr Maves: No, you don't.

Mr Marchese: The member from Niagara Centre is going to have two minutes to explain to us how, by giving my public money, your money, to a private school is going to make education equal for all when those who have a lot, who don't need my help—

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Public Safety and Security): "Equal" means more for Toronto.

Mr Marchese: No, I'm not saying that. I'm saying that when you suck away 120 million bucks from the pockets of ordinary citizens, poor people, to give away to wealthy people, that is bad, Bob Runciman. That is bad, Minister.

In a study that I've just seen, done by the National Post—I'm sure they won't attack the National Post as they will the Toronto Star when I quote them in a few moments—the Alberta study found that full-time attendance in junior and senior kindergarten programs had a dramatic impact on children's mastery of key learning skills, particularly reading, and may be an important influence on their ability to succeed in the first years of school. The study raises the question of whether it may be a mistake for schools to hold back on kindergarten time, as they may end up eventually paying the cost for students lagging behind.

José da Costa, an education professor at the University of Alberta and one of the authors of the study, said, "The evidence should compel educational authorities to implement full-day, five-day-a-week kindergarten immediately, particularly for schools in low-income neighbourhoods," yet Mr Christie, the marionette whose strings are controlled centrally by Monsieur Eves and Madame Witmer, just got rid of nine senior kindergartens from inner-city schools.

"Why should Toronto have it all?" says the Minister of Public Safety and Security. "Toronto wants it all." Toronto doesn't want it all. It just would like some fairness. It would like some equity. Toronto says, "If we have more poor kids than some other area, it would be nice to give a little more," because the way to get to equality is to make sure that where the situation is unequal or where people are unequal, we give them more to reach a level playing field. Otherwise, we will create inequality forever.

So, Minister, I'm telling you, taking money away from poor kids is bad public policy. Sucking away \$120 million from our public system that is badly needed, I argue, is bad policy. Eliminating through your supervisor Christie, who ought not to be there, a highly paid Conservative former city councillor who ought not to be there—the kind of money you pay him to close nine senior kindergarten schools is bad public policy. It's dumb politics. But it is Conservative politics. It is a way of perpetuating inequality in our system. It is a way of perpetuating inequality under the guise of a bill they call Right Choices for Equity in Education, so that rich parents can get my money and yours to send their kiddies to private schools. It's bad, sad public policy.

Some \$2 billion has been taken out of the education system, and Mr Clark, the minister, stands up and says, "We're telling the truth." I couldn't believe that statement. "We're telling the truth. We put in \$2 billion; we didn't take out \$2 billion." It's amazing that a minister could stand up in spite of the fact that Dr Rozanski told them they have to put back \$2 billion, including raising the benchmarks that had been deliberately set low in 1997, which would mean you'd have to put another \$1.3 billion or \$1.4 billion in order to get to the point where we were.

People for Education, the group that has diligently tracked your cuts, the group that you sometimes deride, the group about which you often say, "Their research isn't research at all," the group that is able to track your cuts to our education system, says the following.

"Specialist teachers: there has been a 22% drop since 1997-98 in the number of schools with physical education teachers—down to 32% this year." This is June 3, 2003. "But in southwestern Ontario, only 25% of schools have physical education teachers.

"There has been a 29% drop since 1997-98 in schools with music teachers—down to 41% this year, and in northern Ontario only 23% of schools have music teachers.

"The percentage of grade 7 and 8 schools with guidance counsellors has dropped by more than half—down to 12% province-wide; but outside central Ontario and the GTA, fewer than 8% of schools report guidance counsellors for grade 7 and 8 students.

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"English as a second language (ESL): The number of schools reporting ESL programs has dropped by 29% since 1997-98. The number of schools with ESL students

but no ESL teacher has increased by 62% since 1999-2000.

"Libraries: The number of schools with teacher-librarians has declined by 28%—down to 58% this year. In Eastern Ontario that number drops to 26%. There has been an 85% increase in the number of schools with libraries open only part-time.

"Special education: Student-teacher ratios in special education have increased every year for three years, with ratios varying from an average of 16 students to one teacher in Toronto, to 30 to one in southwestern Ontario. In 2002-03, there were approximately 42,000 students in Ontario elementary schools waiting for special education services, a number that continues to increase every year.

"Fundraising: Parents raised a total of approximately \$35 million province-wide; 67% of schools reported fundraising for basics (textbooks, classroom supplies, computers).

"School buildings: Fifty-two per cent of schools in our survey are over 40 years old;"—member from Niagara Centre, listen to this—"16% reported that renovations or additions were required but not approved; 33% reported that general upgrades for roofs, furnaces, paint and carpets were required but not approved.

"Phil Sarvino, consulting engineer for Read, Jones and Christopherson, estimates costs for maintaining school buildings. He says, 'Leaving school maintenance undone is going to cost more than double the money in the long run. We are in danger of losing valuable buildings, irreplaceable architecture and, even worse, risking the health of the students.'

"Community use of schools: There has been a 10% drop since 1998-99 in the number of schools reporting community use. There has been a 113% increase since 1998-99 in the number of schools reporting charging fees for community use."

Then Minister Clark stands up here and says, "We are telling the truth."

Mr Maves: Whose document is that?

Mr Marchese: Member for Niagara Centre, I told you who it was. You weren't here when I said it: People for Education.

Mr Maves: Annie Kidder?

Mr Marchese: Annie Kidder. Annie, the member for Niagara Centre is laughing at you, meaning he doesn't trust your work. He obviously believes you must be some radical lefty. You ought to tell him. He derides your work. He derides the fact that you and so many others for so many years have voluntarily tracked this government's malfeasance, the only group at the time that was able and has done this voluntarily, without pay, for many years. But the member for Niagara Centre and Monsieur Clark, the minister, say, "We are telling the truth."

One hundred and twenty million bucks—money taken from our pockets to support wealthy people. It's this kind of politics that has encouraged billionaire Garfield Weston from making an announcement in what he calls the Children First School Choice Trust, where he will pay \$3,500 to any poor parents on a scaling basis, those

earning less than \$35,000 or \$40,000 or so, based on a lottery so that poor kids of poor parents—because if you're making \$25,000, \$30,000, \$35,000, \$40,000, it's not exactly rich in this province. But Mr Garfield, the billionaire, like this Conservative government, supports choice because he argues, like this government, that this is great competition, that it will force the public system to deliver better services. He's giving \$3,500 through a charitable foundation, working alongside the Fraser Institute, a very neutral organization—

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): Mr Speaker, I would ask you to call this member to order. I think it's totally out of order for him to malign the husband of the former lieutenant governor.

You don't even have the name right, if you are referring—

Mr Gerretsen: It's Galen Weston, not Garfield.

Mrs Marland: You're saying "Garfield," and I think it's a bit—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Sit down.

The member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr Marchese: The member for Kingston and the Islands enjoyed that. Isn't that funny? He enjoyed that intervention. Funny that he should; I'm not sure why.

But, member for Kingston and the Islands, you know the billionaire we're talking about, don't you—Mr Weston? I'm sure you do. I don't know where you stand on this issue, but all I'm saying is that he, like this Conservative government, is giving away \$3,500 through a charitable foundation that was set up by the Fraser Institute. Member for Niagara Centre, that's an organization that I'm sure you recognize. He's hardly a socialist, but he's giving away his money through a charitable foundation through the workings of the Fraser Institute, so he can help poor kids go to private schools. Can you believe that? Can you believe that he's going to allow a parent who only earns \$35,000 to send their kid to a private school, where that individual is going to have to find the additional \$3,000, \$3,500, \$4,000, \$6,000 or \$10,000 or whatever it takes to send them to a private school? He's going to force an impoverished parent to find the additional money to send them to a private school?

What favour is he doing? What charitable act is this? He would force a poor parent, by winning a lottery, to find the extra \$3,000 or \$7,000 so they can send their kids to a private school, and he thinks he's doing them a favour? Better that he send some of his money to help the Conservatives restore the textbooks we're missing in our schools. Better that he help this government send some money so we can have guidance teachers, librarians, music teachers and phys ed teachers, so that poor kids can have access to our community schools, so they can play basketball and the like.

Mr Weston, use your money more wisely to help the poor, if you want to. This is not the way to do it.

But Mr Weston's initiative and the government's initiative go hand in hand. They work in tandem. Their policies are the same. The billionaire's policy of helping

choice, of helping promote private schools, of creating the impression that private school is the only answer for poor kids, gives them a fool's dream. It doesn't work. Poor kids would never feel at home in a rich school, let alone find the extra money to be sent there.

The answer is in our public system; the answer is in providing full-time junior kindergarten and senior kindergarten, like New Democrats propose and promise in our platform, so that kids have a chance to succeed in our public system. That's the direction we need to move in, not your road map and your go-kart kind of platform policies. Sorry, it's not going to work.

In the Toronto Star there's a big article talking about "When students are on the edge, whether they're homeless, or suicidal, or in an abusive relationship, they're likely to blow if they don't have a release valve. Youth counsellors were that release valve."

Christie, your marionette at the Toronto board, cut them all. Youth counsellors, who help students at risk—who otherwise would be dropping out and be a harm to themselves and society—they're gone. They can't help those students. They are youth at risk, supported by youth counsellors. Christie, former city councillor, Tory, former Stockwell campaign manager and marionette for your malfeasance, cut them all. Bad, bad; bad politics and bad policy.

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New Democrats are unequivocal about this. We do not support private schools. We do not support public dollars for denominational or non-denominational schools. That is a belief and a principle of ours, and no New Democrat has ever wavered in that regard. We're very clear: we need to put public dollars in our public system. That's where our money needs to go. Dr Rozanski had the right idea. If only you had the willingness and the desire to implement the majority of those recommendations, we wouldn't have Mr Christie here; we wouldn't have the other supervisors in Hamilton and Ottawa because they would have the money to give our public school kids the opportunities and the equality that so many are desperately looking for.

I'm happy to have had this opportunity to beat up on this government, to beat up on the Liberals and to have an opportunity to beat up on the federals when the time comes.

Hon Doug Galt (Minister without Portfolio): I was quite entertained by the speaker we were just listening to from the riding of Trinity-Spadina. Most of his speech talked about wealthy students. I can't help but think of the independent schools in my riding. It's anything but particularly wealthy students who go to the two Christian schools. Their parents say they struggle pretty hard to raise the dollars to send the students to those schools. There may be a little more wealthy students who go to one of the other schools, but in general it's certainly not the wealthy who are going. He speaks as if that money is just disappearing down into a black hole, when in fact it's a tax credit that will be recycled many, many times over

and probably have quite a stimulus to the economy by being able to be spent in other ways.

I particularly enjoyed his reference to the Liberal Party of Ontario and their incompetence. That's one thing I would indeed have to agree with him on. It's also interesting, as I mentioned, how the Liberal Party of Ontario hammers out some of its policy. I'll read the headlines from a publication of OSSTF. It says, "OSSTF Members Hammer Out Liberal Education Policy." Now I know where the Liberals get their education policy: it comes directly from OSSTF. No wonder they're so supportive of the union.

Our government puts students first, parents put students first, teachers put students first; teachers' unions put students last. We're with the students. Students should be first, and that's certainly not where unions, the teachers' union anyway—many other unions would put students first, but certain teachers' unions don't. Teachers do. I don't think there's any question that the number one concern that teachers have is for the students, and rightly so. I would think that even the member for Trinity-Spadina would put students first, although he's awfully concerned about those that might be wealthy.

This article is quite interesting. I quote: "OSSTF had a strong presence at the three-day meeting due in large part to our members assuming delegate responsibilities for their local Liberal riding associations. OSSTF members made up over 15% of the 400 or so delegates at the meeting." That would be about 60 teachers' union members who were there. I'm wondering—400. This is February 1: "Liberal Party members gathered in Oakville for the weekend of February 1 to prepare the pillars to support their commitments to Ontarians in anticipation of a provincial election."

Is that all you get out: 400 delegates? That's only four per riding; it's less than four per riding. Where were the rest of your delegates? Were they at home, twiddling their fingers? Are they not interested in your party? What is going on? You could only rally out 400 delegates to a convention in the middle of the winter, when there's nothing else to do. If I were a Liberal member, I'd be ashamed of that.

I was also listening to the member from Parkdale-High Park. He was talking about this time allocation issue like it was a terrible thing that we're bringing it in. If we weren't blocked with every bill we bring in—getting in the road, not allowing a reasonable amount of debate and getting on with the vote—it's because of their tactics that we have to bring in time allocation so that something can get done in this Legislature.

I think it's interesting that the Liberals are totally committed to eliminating this credit. What a shame. They're against parents to have a choice, against students to go to a Christian school; penalize them.

As a matter of fact, they're also against the tax credit for seniors. Imagine, that they'd be against seniors getting a few dollars back so they could stay in their homes just a little longer. But no, not for the Liberals. They will take that away. They'll take away any other tax credit or

tax cut we've made just so they can feed this spending frenzy. Spend, tax and borrow—the acronym is STAB—and we had been stabbed in the province of Ontario by the Liberals and the NDP for those 10 lost years. Spend, tax and borrow has been the policy.

If you look at Dalton McGuinty, Dalton came out and actually honestly said he thought the tax increase would have to be \$4.8 billion; we calculated somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$12 billion based on the promises he has come out with. Imagine, if it's really what Dalton says it is—\$4.8 billion—what that will do to our economy. It will drive industry south of the border; jobs will disappear. Most of those 1.1 million net new jobs in Ontario that have been created in the last eight years will disappear. Where will they go? They'll go across the border, they'll go to other provinces—exactly where they've come from to this province. That's just some of the reality that's going to happen.

Maybe I should just go back to some notes here. I do have some notes.

Our government believes in a strong publicly funded education system, and we respect parents' right to choose. As a matter of fact, that's in our platform: the right to choose. I've lobbied for a very long time that regardless of which school area a student lives in, they should have an opportunity to choose to go to any school within that school board, and that's exactly what's in our platform: the opportunity to go to any school that is in their school board jurisdiction.

Then, with this tax credit, it will give parents the assistance to choose some of the other schools, such as the independent schools. Why should a student, just because they live at lot 10, concession 2 in rural Ontario, have to go to a certain school and to a certain teacher? That's a monopoly at its worst. I know there is a separate school and a public system. There's certainly a choice in secondary but a rather limited choice in the elementary panel. I think it's back to making sure there is a choice for our students.

The plan to reinstate the phase-in of the equity in education tax credit is about supporting parental choice in education. We've introduced this, and with this bill 20% of this credit will be recognized in 2003 and will be up to 50% by 2006.

The member from Trinity-Spadina was awfully concerned about the wealthy. Well, it has a limit, going up to \$3,500 as a tax credit maximum. Even if the tuition is \$30,000, \$40,000 or \$50,000, it really isn't going to matter, because there is a limit on this and \$3,500 will be that maximum amount.

I wanted to spend just a little bit of time talking about some of the things that are happening in education and where it's going in general. When we took office in 1995, the international tests for our students were truly an embarrassment, there was no question. We were coming in at the bottom of the pile consistently. Now, it's surprising how well our students are doing in such a short amount of time. For example, provincial grade 3 math test scores have increased by over 35% since 1998. That

in itself is quite a turnaround. International math and science tests show Ontario improved significantly between 1995 and 1999, moving ahead of England and the US, countries that were way ahead of our students before. More recently, international literacy test scores show Ontario in the top five, ahead of jurisdictions such as the United States, Germany and Singapore. High school students taking the new four-year program are graduating in record numbers, well prepared for their next important steps.

1700

I think that's something that's so important in education today, to have our young people prepared to compete on the international stage. It's not good enough when you're out in the workforce to get 50% or 60% to pass. If you're going to put your product on the market, you have to be better than all the other companies that are out there competing. We see what's going on in Asia, particularly with China, and how they're competing in hi-tech areas where we really have to have our students be more than up to par. They have to excel past par. They have to be coming out topping many other countries or our country is just not going to compete. We're not going to have the prosperity that we've gotten used to.

I'm sure you've had many people come to you, Mr Speaker, saying that grade 12 students can't read and write. That's quite an embarrassment to the system. We're ensuring that anybody who graduates with a grade 12 certificate can indeed have a good level when it comes to English comprehension and being able to read.

Equal funding for students across Ontario has been a hallmark in some of the things that we've been doing, to ensure that there would be equal funding.

It was a bit of a shambles looking at some of the school report cards and trying to figure them out. You almost had to have a glossary of terms to really know what your student was doing. We now have a consistent report card. I'm sure if the member for Kingston and the Islands looked at one of those, if he has some children or grandchildren in the system, he'd be able to understand the accomplishments of those students now that there is a report card that's consistent and is filled out consistently.

That leads me to another point, and that is teachers in work-to-rule not filling out report cards and refusing to do that kind of work. It was good to see the legislation go through for the separate board here in Toronto and to get them back to work, which included that they couldn't continue with work-to-rule. But that wasn't what the Liberals thought. No. They wanted to send them back and have work-to-rule, where the teachers would be there just when the students were in class and couldn't take any work home with them. I've been told and I understand that they were having their briefcases or dinner pails searched as they left, just in case they were taking work home to help the students. That's the point to which we've deteriorated. I think that's most unfortunate, and then getting \$500 fines because they wanted to help the students. That is not putting the students first. That's the union attitude of not putting students first. The teachers

want to put students first, but that is certainly not what the unions would allow them to do.

We're going to be bringing in legislation right after the next election—the sooner, the better—

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Bring it now.

Hon Mr Galt: We need a mandate. You'll complain if we bring this kind of thing in without a mandate. It's in our platform. We'll get the mandate, we'll come back, and we'll then bring in legislation to make it illegal for teachers to strike. Education will become an essential service.

Mr Duncan: Call an election.

Hon Mr Galt: We'll call an election right after you call some nomination meetings. When it comes to the democratic process, the Liberal Party of Ontario is opposed to democracy. Dalton McGuinty has been out appointing candidates. He wouldn't let the local Liberal association select—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Galt: Five. That's right. He can appoint one more. You had better be careful, member for Kingston and the Islands. Somebody may get appointed in Kingston and you won't be the candidate to run. That's what's going on with the Liberal Party of Ontario: appointing candidates. And they talk about democracy, talk about calling an election? If they would have a fair nomination meeting, then maybe we could get on with an election. We're just giving them some extra time to have a fair nomination meeting.

I come back to this bill. The opposition sort of got me just a little sidetracked here. It's a very important bill. It's Bill 53, The Right Choices for Equity in Education Act, that will have 20% this year and will rise to some 50% of a tax credit by 2006 based on tuition of up to \$7,000. So they'll get a tax credit of \$3,500. I think that's just tremendous. I look forward to this bill receiving speedy passage.

I'm quite sure there are many in the Liberal ranks who also want to see this bill get speedy passage. I would bet dollars to doughnuts that when the vote comes, there will be a half-dozen seats over there that will not be filled because those members just can't come in the House and vote against it. We heard the Minister of Labour speaking a few minutes ago, talking about the different members and their quotes. Although it would be typical Liberal to flip-flop back and forth, I have enough respect for those Liberals that I doubt if they'll come in the House and vote with their party. It's best they just stay away so they don't have to flip-flop.

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity to speak on the time allocation motion for Bill 53.

Mr Gerretsen: Of course the first thing that ought to be said is that this is once again a closure motion, another closure motion where the government is basically saying, "We don't want any further debate. We do not want this bill to go to committee. We do not want to have any debate on third reading. We're shutting her down."

I believe they've got a 100% record. There may have been one bill that was unanimously approved by every-

body, but other than that, they've invoked closure each and every time since we came back at the end of April. This has got to be the most undemocratic government that has been elected in the province of Ontario, having invoked closure more often than all the other governments put together over the last 135 years in this province.

I cannot let the comments of the last member go by without saying something about senior citizens. I'll tell you, this party, the party that's headed by Dalton McGuinty, the Ontario Liberal Party, is absolutely committed to making sure that the senior citizens of this province, who have done so much for this province, are being treated correctly and rightly. The idea of treating them correctly is not to give \$450 million in tax credits to all of the seniors out there, but to say, "No. We are going to put \$450 million toward those seniors who really need the help." Those are the seniors who need the help through home care. We've already said we're going to invest \$225 million so that seniors can stay in their own homes as long as possible with the care that they require from the home care services that are out there. We all know that VONs have closed across the province, and many other organizations as well, and the main reason for that is the fact that there have been so many cutbacks in the CCACs across this province in home care services for both post-acute-care and for chronic care individuals who need it at home. That's where we're going to invest the money.

We are going to invest money into long-term care so that Ontario will no longer rank last in the amount of nursing and hours of personal care that seniors are getting in the nursing homes but will rank near the top. The only way to do that is to start investing \$250 million in that area.

So what we're saying, seniors, is, yes, we're totally with you. We are with those seniors who need the help, and that's where the investment should be.

Let me very quickly talk about this particular bill we're dealing with here, Bill 53. Let me just say that this is not an easy decision. From what we have heard so far from both the New Democratic Party and from the Tory party it's all clear-cut, and there may be differences of opinion on this. My golly, within your own ranks there you had some differences of opinion too.

What did Ernie Eves say back in December 2001 about the private school tax credit, the same thing that's in this bill right now? In the Windsor Star he said, "I think it's kind of ludicrous myself," when he was referring to Jim Flaherty's idea at the time. Of course Flaherty won that day, because now Eves is embracing it. But that's what he said then. And what did Flaherty say when this bill first came forward? He said, "I think it was a flip-flop" by the Premier, and that's reported in the Toronto Star of March 2002.

1710

Let's go on to Janet Ecker. There was this discussion earlier as to whether or not this bill is taking money out of the public system. They get kind of cute, because what

they're really saying is, "Well, the money hasn't come into the system and therefore you're not taking money out of the system." But we all know that the system, when it's fully implemented, is going to be about \$500 million short. Even the Minister of Finance agreed with that, because what did she say in the year 2000 to the Toronto Star? She said, "We've been very clear that our goal is a good quality public education system, and the estimates of \$300 million"—it's now up to \$500 million—"needed to fund religious schools would be \$300 million that would come out of the public school system."

Interjection: She's seen the light.

Mr Gerretsen: "She's seen the light," the member says—the would-be minister, but he's a member now.

The point is simply that, yes, people have differences of opinion on this, and there may be some members in our party who may have made different statements and had different opinions on it as well, and that's healthy in any democracy. Surely to goodness no party comes into any situation, any position at all, without having some divisions within their own ranks. You talk it out, and then you decide collectively what the position on the particular situation is going to be. I don't think there's anything unusual or unhealthy about that.

Let me make it quite clear that I personally feel that there's a great difference between the private schools, such as Upper Canada College, and the denominational schools. I believe, and I will even agree to a certain extent with some of the comments that the member from Northumberland made, that the people who send their children to denominational schools are not the rich or the wealthy. Quite often they're people who are hard-working but feel they want to give their kids a different education. I say more power to them.

The real question is, are we as a system going to support that kind of situation? That's the real issue, and the issue as far as I'm concerned and as far as this party is concerned is that right now the money is needed in public education. You may recall the minister here talked about, "Well, we're spending more money on public education now than we did in 1995." Well, obviously you are. I don't know what the cost of living has gone up by in the last eight years, but it's got to be around 20% to 25%, and presumably with just about every government program that's out there, whether we're talking about education or health care or what have you, just to keep up with the increased demands for services, with the increased cost of living etc, obviously the government's going to spend more money in that particular area. There's absolutely no question about it.

The real issue is, should people who send their kids to Upper Canada College, in effect, once this is thing is fully phased in and implemented, be able to take \$3.8 million by way of tax credits? Is that the right thing to do? I doubt very much that even the backbench members in the Conservative Party agree with that notion. I don't think that you agree with that notion, not at this point in time. You and I go into a lot of schools, as all good

members do, and we all know that there are fewer music teachers now, there are fewer phys-ed teachers, there are fewer special-ed teachers. We've all heard those complaints. Those complaints don't just come to Liberal members. There are many more fees that have to be paid now for school uses etc.

The point quite simply is that from a human resource viewpoint and from a physical structures viewpoint and from a supply viewpoint, schools simply do not even have the same kinds of resources that they had in 1995. I think it's our obligation, on behalf of the youngsters of this province, to make sure that those schools are properly funded before we start going down the road of funding some other schools that are out there as well.

We all know that there is a method whereby an associated school concept, under an established school board, can operate, provided that those schools, whether denominational or otherwise, adhere to the Ontario curriculum, adhere to the teaching standards that are required and adhere to all the other requirements, such as, for example, the provincial curriculum, the standardized testing and having certified teachers.

If somebody wants to go outside that scheme and send their kids to schools that do not have those kinds of requirements, they should be allowed to, but they shouldn't expect the taxpayer, in effect, directly or indirectly, to support it. That is the position.

I say to my friends opposite, yes, it is a difficult issue for some individuals, particularly for those of us who have some private denominational schools in our ridings, because those are hard-working people. What I say to those people, quite simply and directly, is that the publicly funded school system has been completely underfunded, and unless you're willing to bring your school within one of the associated models under one of the school boards, we simply cannot support this at this point in time.

Mr Maves: It's a pleasure for me to rise and join the debate, and to comment on my friend from Trinity-Spadina beating up his colleague from Niagara Centre through his speech. I mentioned that to him before. I know he's going to have a chat with his own member and correct the record.

I wanted to pick up on good Dr Galt from Northumberland, who talked about who sets the policies for the different parties. He talked about the OSSTF article. This has appeared in the OSSTF magazine. Members opposite catcalled and yelled out, "When was that article printed?" This article, "OSSTF Members Hammer out Liberal Education Policy," which Dr Galt talked about, was from February 12, 2002, I say to my good friend from Kingston and the Islands. So it's a very recent article. Very recently, where you had a Liberal convention of 400 people, nearly 15% were members of the OSSTF who set the Liberal education policy. That's kind of sad.

On the other side of the aisle, of course, you have the NDP, where my friend from Trinity-Spadina very clearly said his policy is set by Annie Kidder, a well-known education activist in Ontario.

On this side of the aisle, we are happy to have education policy set by the people of Ontario, I say to my colleagues. Let me give you some examples. It was the people of Ontario who said we need a newer, fairer funding formula in the province, that the old way of funding education based on where you lived and the size of the property tax assessment was not fair, was not right. In fact, there are 24 studies dating back to the 1950s that said that. The people of Ontario asked us to change that, and we did.

The people of Ontario said they wanted teachers tested. We listened and we've done that. The people of Ontario said they wanted a tougher, new curriculum for students in the education system. Once again, it was our party that listened to the public of Ontario and did that. We didn't sit back and let the OSSTF union and the OECTA union leaders and everyone else tell us what our policy should be. We listened to the public of Ontario and we implemented those policies.

We listened to the people of Ontario who were very frustrated for many years about report cards. They couldn't read them any more. They didn't understand them any more. They weren't uniform. They wanted standardized, province-wide report cards. We did that, because the people of Ontario wanted that.

One more thing that was long overdue in Ontario was province-wide standardized testing for kids, some objective testing so you could know what your kids were learning, if they were on track or if they were not on track. They wanted to know if the schools their kids were in were performing well or not performing well. The boards, compared to other boards, wanted to know how they were doing. They wanted some objective testing.

Members opposite said we were crazy to bring in that kind of testing. We were wrong, they said. They said, "It's too much pressure on kids. Don't have testing on kids. Don't have testing on teachers. It's too much pressure." But we said to the people of Ontario, "You're right," and we implemented that.

1720

Out of that, we've seen, for example, that recent international literacy test scores show Ontario now in the top five, ahead of jurisdictions such as the United States, Germany and Singapore, instead of behind them. International math and science tests show Ontario improved significantly between 1995 and 1999, moving ahead of both England and the US. Provincial grade 3 math test scores have increased by over 35% since 1998.

Clearly, our education policies, which the people of Ontario asked for and which we implemented, are working. Why is that? Because we don't sit back and have OSSTF union members hammer out our policy, as the Liberal Party does, or let Annie Kidder, the education activist, dictate to us what she thinks our policy should be; we listen to the people of Ontario.

The odd time we'll send out an expert in a field to do a consultation process and come back and tell us what we might do differently. We sent Mr Rozanski out to do that recently. He came back after meeting with over 500

groups from all across the province, including union groups and school boards, and said to us, "You need to put \$1.8 billion of funding into the education system over the next three years." We've already committed to doing that and going beyond that, putting \$2 billion into education funding over the next three years.

I'm going to sit down now to leave some time for my colleague Ms Molinari.

Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston): I am very happy to speak on what amounts to yet another time allocation motion by this government on a very serious matter: the education tax credit that this government is offering.

I don't think there's any doubt that this is a very serious threat to the public education system. I don't think you could make the case that publicly funded education in our province has done very well over the last eight years, since this government was elected. In fact, sometimes I give my head a shake and say, "Is this the Ontario I knew when I was growing up? Is this the Ontario of the Progressive Conservative Party of Bill Davis, of Progressive Conservative Parties in the past that had the wisdom to know that funding public education was of great importance to the people of this province?" It led to the kind of society we now have, which is somewhat threatened, I have to say, because the public education system is threatened by this education tax credit.

There is no doubt that any dollars going to private schools in our province are dollars that are taken away from the public system. Since 1994, I believe, we have measured how many students are enrolling in private schools. What is truly remarkable is that the rate has gone up; that is, the level of growth in public education is going down but the level of growth in private schools is going up, in fact to the tune of about 10 times. So private schools have grown about ten-fold. In 1994, one out of 16 students used to be enrolled in private schools; it's now one out of every four students enrolled in private schools in Ontario. That's a startling difference in numbers. One out of every four students is now enrolled in private schools—it used to be one out of 16—a tremendous growth in the private school system. And of course this tax credit will only exacerbate that, will only increase that dramatically.

Who are we trying to kid? This is a direct threat to the public school system. The public school system needs continuing support. Notwithstanding that the government had the Rozanski report before it, which called for \$1.8 billion to be invested, this government has failed to accelerate those expenditures. They say they'll do it over three years.

Interjection.

Mr Cordiano: Well, you're falling well short of what's required. In fact, my colleague the education critic, the member for Parkdale-High Park, pointed out that tuition fee increases that resulted this year at private schools were exactly the amount of the tax credit being offered by the province: approximately \$1,400. So the

tuition fee increases are eating up any of the tax credits that are being offered by the government. It's not going to parents to defray the costs. It's being eaten up by these private schools.

It's truly remarkable how much money it takes at some of these higher-end private schools. The amounts for tuition per student per year are \$31,000 and \$36,000. These are the upper-tier private schools. Huge amounts of dollars are being spent on per student tuition fees. That is enormous compared to what we actually spend in the public system, which is roughly \$7,000 per student. In some cases the amount that's being spent in the private sector is five times that. So we're asking the public education system to keep up with the private system, and when you compare the two systems, obviously there is a great deal more money in the private system. Yet this government wants to give that private system even more, which will result in the erosion of the quality that we have in our public school system. That's why we as Liberals don't agree with this.

You know, there's a lesson to be learned from the experience south of the border. More than a generation ago, American cities stopped funding their public education systems properly and the middle class moved away from sending their kids to publicly funded institutions. What happened? Well, there was a hollowing out of the inner city. People started moving because those schools saw an erosion. There was a decline in the quality of that education system, and guess what followed: people moved away from the inner city as a result of the lack of public education funding. So not only do you have an erosion of the public education system; you have an erosion in terms of the inner city and the support that was there. Property values went down, and people stopped supporting the public education system and stopped sending their kids to public schools.

That is the experience south of the border, and I say to the government that we cannot allow that to happen here in Ontario. The strength of our province and our society has been a pluralistic system that enables people who did not have wealth and opportunity to get their opportunity for a publicly funded education of high quality. That is the only way to have the kind of society where we look to the future and say there will be opportunity for all of those who are qualified and willing to work hard enough.

We forget at our peril that basic, fundamental value that we hold so dear. It's important not just because we're trying to democratize—that is very important—but it's also important from an economic standpoint. We gain, in the long run, immeasurable wealth from that. As a result of a publicly funded education system, we have a better, more highly trained workforce. We have been able to compete with the rest of the world largely based on a publicly funded education system that brought true value to bear. There is a real value in having a publicly funded education system, and this tax credit threatens that publicly funded education; I don't think there's any question about that. So of course we, as Liberals, are opposed. We will be opposed to this tax credit and to any measure to erode the publicly funded education system.

1730

Hon Tina R. Molinari (Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I am pleased to speak today on the equity in education tax credit. This legislation is very important to my riding of Thornhill. What this is about is giving parents choice in the area of education.

It's our belief that students need a quality education system to receive quality education. That's why the Eves government has provided the largest in-year education funding increase in the history of Ontario. I take great exception to the opposition's saying that this is taking away from the public system. It's not taking away from the public system. We have increased funding to public education from \$12.9 billion in 1995 to \$15.3 billion for the 2003-04 school year. This is the highest level of education funding in Ontario.

I know the benefits of parents having choice. It's important that the members across the way recognize that this is what parents want: choice. I don't see what they have against giving parents the ability to choose where they want to educate their students.

For me, in my riding of Thornhill, it's also a matter of fairness. I don't have any trouble standing up for the policies and initiatives of this government, equally levelling the playing field to make it possible for parents who, for religious needs, have to send their kids to a denominational school.

I want to highlight the assistance and help of a number of residents of Thornhill who have come to me quite often and asked the government to recognize fairness, to recognize the equality they needed for their children going to denominational schools.

I want to highlight Rabbi Israel Janowski, who is also a parent in Thornhill. He is the founder and former president of the Ontario Association of Jewish Day Schools. Rabbi Janowski said, "We are happy that the Eves government has taken into account the educational needs of each child in the province. We are tremendously appreciative of the support we have received from this government and others who were supportive of this initiative."

And it's not just in my riding. I want to quote John Vanasselt of the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools. He said:

"We are very pleased that the Ernie Eves government has reaffirmed its commitment to parental choice in education by restoring the tax credit.

"We also support the government's initiative to keep parents informed as to how our schools evaluate students' progress."

These are just two people I can quote and highlight some of the positive things they have said about what this government is doing.

There is an organization, Jewish Parents for Equality in Education Funding, which came about around 1999. They got together to push government to recognize some of the plight they have: years and years of sending their children to schools for denominational reasons because the public system does not accommodate the needs some

of these families have. Over the years these people have been paying education taxes to the province of Ontario on their residential tax bill. In addition to that, they've been paying tuition to educate their students in a school. They felt they didn't have a choice. The public education system was not a choice for some of these parents, at least not the parents who have their children going to Jewish day schools in my riding of Thornhill. They have specific needs of the education system that are provided for in those schools but not in the public education system. This government has recognized the needs of these parents and other parents across the province.

I don't believe for minute that funding the equity in education tax credit across the province is going to take away from the publicly funded system, because we have continued to invest. The publicly funded system continues to be a priority of this government, along with some of the other priorities such as health care and the environment.

This is a government that is responsible to taxpayers and is responsible to all Ontarians, recognizing that there are some who, for whatever reason, cannot choose public education.

For a number of years, I was a school trustee with the York Catholic school board. I was there for 11 years, and I was chair of that board for four years. I'm proud to say that the Catholic system was a wonderful system, so I'm really surprised to see that some of the people across the way who purport to support Catholic education do not recognize that there are other religious denominations in the province that also deserve equity and that also deserve rights.

I want everyone in the province to know, and they've said over and over again, that if a Liberal government were to win an election, then they would take away the education tax credit. Not only would they take that away, they would take away all the tax cuts that this government has initiated—tax cuts that have provided an economy in Ontario that is booming. We'd go to the dark decade of the Liberals and NDP government, and rising taxes.

The Liberal platform is very clear. They talk about what it's going to cost, yet we all know that it's going to cost a lot more than they're saying. They clearly say that they're going to take away any of the tax cuts that we've initiated. They also say that it's going to cost them money, but it's going to cost more money than what they're saying. I wish I had the figures in front of me, because they are absolutely appalling.

I want to continue to say that in Thornhill this issue is very important. As a matter of fact, it was the single most important issue back in 1999 during the provincial election. At that time, the Liberals were saying that they would consider it. I remember the candidate who ran in Thornhill in 1999 was saying that if he were to be elected and if a Liberal government were to be in power, they would in fact consider recognizing educational choice in the province of Ontario. They don't even have all of their candidates singing from the same song sheet, so I don't

know how we can believe anything the Liberals are saying.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): We have yet another time allocation motion. For people who are watching at home, I have to say that's a motion which chokes off debate on an important piece of legislation. I have heard some good speeches on this legislation and I have heard some that are not good speeches, but all are speeches that are allowed to be made. I must say that I have heard some good speeches which have been made by members on both sides of this House.

This is a very important, philosophical, ideological and practical issue that is before the Legislative Assembly. I would like to see every member with an opportunity to speak to this bill for at least the 20 minutes that would have been available at one time, because I think it is an important bill and there is an important exchange of views to be made. It is a dramatic departure from Premier William Davis, Premier John Robarts, ministers such as the Honourable Robert Welch, the Honourable Tom Wells, the Honourable Larry Grossman, the Honourable Dr. Bette Stephenson. This is a major departure in policy, so I think it's important that the issue be put before the House. What do we have this afternoon? We are dealing instead with a time allocation motion, which the government routinely invokes now to push legislation through.

I want to remind people that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario did not sit, was not in session, from December 12, 2002, until—well, the first question period was May 1, 2003; that's the first time there was a question period. I think we are elected to deal with the business of the province in this House. What happens now is that government wants to sit day and night, wants to invoke closure of motions of debate, confine the debate to as short a period as possible so that the government can be as unaccountable as possible to both the House as a whole, where they have questions directed to them, and to the media scrums or questioning that takes place outside.

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I think this is most unfortunate, this at a time when we're dealing with a crisis in the insurance business, not only automobile insurance but other forms of insurance, where either the premiums are skyrocketing or in fact people are unable to get insurance from the same company they had it from previously. So that's another issue.

We have government advertising, a barrage of government advertising on television, on radio, in the newspapers, in magazines, in pamphlets arriving at the doorstep, paid for by the grateful taxpayer of Ontario, not by the Progressive Conservative Party. Though I may disagree with the content of the ads of the Progressive Conservative Party, I have no objection to those, because that is part of the partisan political process. But using taxpayers' dollars to promote government policies, to congratulate itself because of policies and positions that it's taken, is simply not acceptable. I would not say anybody in this House is hypocritical, but I say a situation would be hypocritical where people would be on the one

hand saying that they do not think money should be squandered on unnecessary expenditures, but on the other hand they would be spending it on government advertising. The situation, rather than any individual, would be hypocritical, because it would be against the rules of this House to refer to anybody as being a hypocrite.

I know that this is a very important issue. I've looked south of the border on the daily news to see what has happened with their system. What has happened is that the public system in the United States is being allowed to deteriorate, and people, by necessity almost, are exiting the public school system and placing their children in private schools. So it is only the poor and others who are unable to access the private school system in the United States who are in the situation where they must go to the public schools, which are being underfunded.

I think what is preferable is to see any jurisdiction improving its publicly funded system. What we need is a strong, vibrant, high-quality publicly funded system that meets all of the needs of students in the province of Ontario or any other jurisdiction. The public school system brings people together. There are people of different religions, people of different ethnic backgrounds, people from different economic backgrounds, people from different geographic areas of the country or even of a community who come together in the public school system, who have access to each other on a daily basis, who learn to tolerate and understand people who are different from themselves. That is a virtue which our publicly funded system offers to people in this province or any other jurisdiction. It provides equality of opportunity for people. We cannot guarantee the outcomes. I understand that, and I'm not one who would say you can. But you can guarantee that equal opportunity, that in a milieu where people are together, the whole society is brought together.

I ask members of this House to consider in their own minds what the ramifications are of curricula which allow people to teach something other than tolerance. In other countries, that happens. We would not want to see that happen in our country, but I give fair warning that in other countries that does happen, and it tends to divide those particular countries and the people within them.

I notice that where we used to offer music and physical education, where we used to offer good library services within the school system, good guidance services, this government's policies militate in favour of phasing those out. The school and the school property, which used to be seen as part of the community, are now becoming more exclusive because very large user fees have to be imposed by boards of education on community groups that wish to use those public buildings, those publicly funded buildings.

I think it would have been important with a bill of this kind to go to the people of Ontario, as we used to, I think with some major effect—to go across the province, to hold public hearings, to gather the necessary input from across the province on this particular piece of legislation so that we could determine whether that's the direction in which people believe we should move.

I recall sitting in on a previous bill that was before the House where it went to various communities, and there were some outstanding presentations made to the committee. I can recall some by long-term Conservative supporters who were part of the publicly funded system, who believe deeply in the school system that Bill Davis as Premier and John Robarts as Premier, and Les Frost before that, had evolved in this province. The Ministers of Education that I mentioned before had tried to strengthen the public school system. I heard those people, loyal Conservatives, come in with a bitterness in their voice that I have not heard in a long time, denouncing what they felt was a major departure from policy which was traditional to the progressive Progressive Conservative Party in this province.

I think the full debate on an issue of this kind, where every member who wishes to speak in this House has an opportunity to do so, is the best kind of debate to have. A time allocation motion, a motion which chokes off debate, as this motion does once again this afternoon, is not a motion that militates in favour of the democratic process but rather shuts down the democratic process.

I am for debate; I'm for placing these ideas before the people. The people, when they choose, make the right decision, because in a democracy the right decision is a decision made by the majority of the people in a province. I think that's an opportunity we should always have in this Legislature, each member elected, perhaps some with different views—I know that within the caucuses that we have represented in this Legislature today there is not necessarily an entirely uniform view. I've listened in the past to different views expressed by members across the way; I've listened to different views expressed by members on this side of the House. This is obviously an issue which is very personal to many people in this province. It's an issue which requires a lot of debate and a lot of assessment.

There was a projection. People said, "Don't worry. If you allow funding that will assist private schools, there won't be a mass exodus." Let me tell you what's happening: there is a very substantial exodus from the

publicly funded system to private schools in this province. Those figures are out there.

Hon Mr Galt: I wonder why.

Mr Bradley: The member says "I wonder why." There are two reasons why, I say to the member for Northumberland: (1) because of the atmosphere that your government has created in the public school system; (2) the incentives you are providing financially for people to leave that system. Those are two very good reasons why there's a betrayal of the Bill Davis, John Robarts, Les Frost view of education in this province.

I have in my own community—I remember they made a presentation to the committee—what used to be called Eden Christian College in Niagara-on-the-lake. Eden Christian College is now Eden High School. It is an alternative school in the city of St Catharines which has a strong enrolment. It is a strong, vibrant school that encompasses people. It is a special kind of school with special consideration within the publicly funded system. The people who are on the board of directors at Eden Christian College made a presentation strongly against what the government was proposing and in favour of the model that they represented within the system. They were part of the Lincoln County board of education; they are now part of the district school board of Niagara.

My message to members of the House, particularly on the government side, is that you should allow a full debate, you should allow public hearings before you proceed further with legislation with the ramifications that this legislation has for this province.

The Acting Speaker: This concludes the time allocated for debate.

Mr Clark has moved government notice of motion number 53.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

It being nearly 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45 of the clock this afternoon.

The House adjourned at 1750.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller

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Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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	Minister of Consumer and Business		Formation et des Collèges et Universités,
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	et à l'enfance		responsable for seniors / ministre des
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Nipissing	McDonald, AL (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Minister of the Environment / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines, ministre de l'Environnement
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Oak Ridges	Klees, Hon / L'hon Frank (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	St Paul's	Bryant, Michael (L)
Oakville	Carr, Hon / L'hon Gary (PC) Speaker / Président	Stoney Creek	Clark, Hon / L'hon Brad (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
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Sault Ste Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)	Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Dwight (L)
Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)	York Centre / -Centre	Kwinter, Monte (L)
Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)	York North / -Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)
		Mississauga West / -Ouest	Vacant

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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No. 27B

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Fourth Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Quatrième session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 17 June 2003

Mardi 17 juin 2003

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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Claude L. DesRosiers



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 17 June 2003

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 17 juin 2003

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO ENERGY BOARD CONSUMER PROTECTION AND GOVERNANCE ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LA PROTECTION DES CONSOMMATEURS ET LA RÉGIE DE LA COMMISSION DE L'ÉNERGIE DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 16, 2003, on the motion for second reading of Bill 23, An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998, and the Municipal Franchises Act in respect of consumer protection, the governance of the Ontario Energy Board and other matters / *Projet de loi 23, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario et la Loi sur les concessions municipales en ce qui a trait à la protection des consommateurs, à la régie de la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario et à d'autres questions.*

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's my pleasure tonight to speak with respect to Bill 23. For those viewing and those listening to the few members who are here, Bill 23 is An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 ... in respect of consumer protection, the governance of the Ontario Energy Board and other matters.

Actually it's quite interesting. In preparing my remarks tonight, I went through Bill 23 and found it to be affecting a number of pieces of legislation in its nature, more specifically the Municipal Franchises Act, as well as the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998. I really think you have to look at this in context. I know the outgoing chair, Floyd Laughren, with the resources and the mandate he had at the time, did yeoman's service and, I believe, did the best that was possible under the circumstances in a very dynamic marketplace.

The Ontario Energy Board, I think under the leadership of the Minister of Energy, the Honourable John Baird, introduced this bill on May 6. I believe it's a bill that's aimed at making this, as is said in the legislation, specifically a very consumer-protecting and consumer-oriented piece of legislation. It certainly is my honour to speak on this bill.

The procedures and initiatives undertaken to improve the services of the Ontario Energy Board will contribute

to increased consumer assistance and a greater public information contribution by the Ontario Energy Board, as those persons know that the energy market needs to have a very strong and effective voice under the able leadership of the incoming chair, Howard Wetston. His long and distinguished service, both on the bench and, more recently, on the Ontario Securities Commission, will serve him well. He certainly is the capable navigator, if you will.

I'd like to take a moment and acknowledge the Premier and of course our Minister of Energy, as I have already, for recognizing the need to improve the process and meet the responsibilities for change at the Ontario Energy Board.

As you heard, on October 7, 2002, Premier Eves ordered a review of the function of the Ontario Energy Board and Minister Baird committed to conduct a review and report back to cabinet within 100 days.

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That review was an extensive consultation process. I should say to you on the record that Mr Baird came to my riding, met with some eminent leaders in the energy field—senior executive people, mostly former members of OPG, then Ontario Hydro—and I think I could comment very fairly in saying they came away very impressed with Minister Baird's carriage of this particular piece of legislation.

The Ministry of Energy posted a consultation paper on their Web site and received a large number of responses. I participated in that process myself by arranging a community meeting. In addition, Mr Baird met personally with a wide range of energy stakeholders, groups and organizations. Submissions were presented, consultations were undertaken, views were offered and opinions were shared. I might say, in the most fair-minded way, we wanted to make sure that consumers' interests were matched and that the industry mandate was there and was up to the challenge that lay before us with respect to the market in the energy field.

Throughout these hours of dialogue, the government listened to the people of this province. They indicated that they wanted more information on energy matters. They told us they wanted input into the hearings process. They expressed their desire for decisions made in meaningful time frames, effectively eliminating retroactive charges. The issue of retroactive charges has reared its head over the last while, more recently in the natural gas field, and certainly the minister has heard that. They spoke, we listened and we acted. Bill 23, the

bill we're discussing tonight, is the result of those discussions.

In bringing forward this legislation, it is incumbent on us to understand the role of the Ontario Energy Board. Therefore, I'd like to take a few moments to highlight for my colleagues on all sides of the House the functions and duties of the Ontario Energy Board and how this proposed legislation would improve this very vital and important organization.

The Ontario Energy Board is an independent body with regulatory oversight of both natural gas and electricity matters. It provides advice on energy matters referred to it by the Ministry of Energy, as well as the Ministry of Natural Resources.

In the electricity sector, the board is guided by a number of objectives. It would suffice here to suggest the five issues that I'm aware of: (1) to facilitate competition in the generation and sale of electricity and facilitate a smooth transition to competition; (2) to protect the interests of consumers with respect to price and the reliability and quality of electricity service; (3) to promote economic efficiency in the generation, transmission and distribution of electricity; (4) to facilitate the maintenance of a financially viable electricity industry; and (5) to promote energy conservation and energy efficiency.

I would have to say that Steve Gilchrist, as the minister in charge of alternative energy—I think that's it—is certainly charged with the broader issue of conservation as well as efficiency. I know that in our more recent budget remarks there was a commitment, on behalf of the people of Ontario to save energy.

As I previously noted, the Ontario Energy Board also has regulatory oversight for natural gas in our province. The board's objectives in this area are as follows: (1) to facilitate competition in the sale of gas to users; (2) to maintain just and reasonable rates for the transmission, distribution and storage of natural gas; and (3) to promote energy conservation and energy efficiency consistent with the policies of the Ontario government.

Consumer protection is one of the most important functions of the Ontario Energy Board. To ensure an adequate level of consumer protection in the energy market, the board has developed codes of conduct for gas marketers and electricity retailers and has established a complaint resolution process for energy consumers.

In the energy sector, the board sets transmission and distribution rates and approves the budget and fees of the Independent Electricity Market Operator, often referred to as the IMO—budget and fees. In addition, the Ontario Energy Board licenses all market participants including the IMO, generators, transmitters, distributors, wholesalers and retailers. The board also monitors markets in the electricity sector and reports to the ministry on the efficiencies, fairness, transparencies and competitiveness of the market, as well as reporting on any abuse or potential abuse of market power. The board may also be asked to review the IMO rules and market rules and consider appeals for IMO orders.

In the natural gas sector, the board regulates Ontario's natural gas utilities, which are required to submit the

rates they propose to charge their consumers to the board for review and approval.

The Ontario Energy Board licenses all markets that sell natural gas to residents and small commercial consumers. Board approval is also required before a natural gas utility can sell its distribution system or amalgamate with other distributors. The Ontario Energy Board was established over 40 years ago and, as I have just outlined, has since that time been responsible for numerous important aspects of Ontario's energy sector. It has changed with time and adapted with circumstances. It has evolved and expanded, and it has served us well. However, with time comes the opportunity for refinement and improvement, and that is what Bill 23 is all about. I hope the viewers and those listening tonight see, as I've outlined, the strengthening of the role of the Ontario Energy Board.

I would say, most importantly, these proposed changes would ensure that the interests of the consumer are first. This government believes that an informed consumer is indeed a protected consumer. We believe that an informed consumer is a well-served consumer.

The Ontario Energy Board has up to eight full-time members, including a chair and vice-chair, plus a number of part-time members. Traditionally, the members have been appointed for a three-year term. We heard from consultations with the various groups and stakeholders that there needs to be more stability and consistency on the board. As a result, this proposed legislation, Bill 23, would set board member terms for an initial two-year period, with renewal terms of up to five years. With the messages we received and the action we have taken, this initiative would allow for the stability and consistency in the structure required for optimum management of the Ontario Energy Board.

Another concern raised during the consultation was the area of the board's day-to-day operations. Bill 23 would establish a management committee comprising the chair and two vice-chairs. The management committee would oversee the board's performance, the fee structure and the resources needed. This would then enable the board members to concentrate their full attention and energy on the important work of the hearings.

The review and consultation process provided the chance to strengthen and tighten the functions and duties of the Ontario Energy Board with a view to better serving the energy consumer. First and foremost is the protection of the consumer of energy. Bill 23 would allow for improved consumer protection and support, for example, by clustering interested parties and arguments together so that hearings are streamlined, with the same or similar points grouped together more effectively to strengthen the arguments and the decisions being made.

The Ontario Energy Board has regulatory oversight over both natural gas and electricity matters in this great province, as I've said before, and it is apparent that there have been differences in the regulatory process for natural gas and electricity. Bill 23 would examine ways to level the playing field and harmonize the powers of the

Ontario Energy Board in order to eliminate these differences whenever possible and to streamline the regulation of both electricity and natural gas, which just makes common sense.

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In reviewing the possibility for improvements, the minister—and in the board's procedures, we heard that there should be more focus on goals and outcomes. Under Bill 23, the board would establish an annual regulatory calendar with a statement of priorities. This would allow increased accountability and enhance, once again, consumer service and protection.

Bill 23, the proposed legislation, would require the board to promote greater communications within the electricity and natural gas industry groups as well as education of the consumer. As I stated earlier, this government believes that an informed consumer is indeed a protected consumer.

As the board's decisions have a far-reaching and significant impact on the citizens of our great province, we feel the Ontario Energy Board owes it to the consumers to communicate what it is doing in an effective, concise and consistent manner. As Minister Baird has previously stated—and I listened very respectfully and at some length last night to him and Commissioner Gilchrist—effective communication must be a priority for the board. The provisions in the proposed Bill 23 would allow for better information, thus giving people an opportunity to plan for themselves and their organizations.

We understand that energy is important to our lives and our economy. The protection of all consumers has been and continues to be a priority for the OEB. The board protects the interests of consumers with respect to price, by ensuring the reliability and quality of electricity and gas services and by maintaining just and reasonable rates for the transmission and distribution of electricity and natural gas and for the storage of natural gas.

The hearings, submissions and consultations told us that consumers wanted increased protection and safety. Bill 23, if passed, delivers on that very wish to protect consumers from excessive rate impacts of retroactive charges. This was a controversial issue. Bill 23 would require that every three months the board order how and whether amounts recorded in deferral or variance accounts must be reflected in gas or electricity commodity rates.

We all know the decision of the retroactivity charges that became a problem for party members from all sides of the House. This bill, Bill 23, deals with this in a more timely manner. Furthermore, deferral or variance accounts not related to commodity rates must be reviewed every 12 months, or a shorter period if required by regulation. In addition, the board shall consider the number of billing periods over which such amounts must be divided in order to mitigate the impact on the consumer. That seems a fair and reasonable approach.

The consultation was, as I said before, exhaustive, extensive and inclusive. Concerns were heard and con-

cerns were addressed. This proposed legislation of the Ontario Energy Board Consumer Protection and Governance Act reflects the input we received and our government's commitment to resolve the issues.

In closing, let me acknowledge the hard work of the dedicated staff of the Ontario Energy Board and the outgoing board, and recognize the record of service to the citizens of the province over the past four decades of the Ontario Energy Board. The changes and improvements of this proposed legislation will enhance and strengthen the operational tools of the board and allow the individuals of the Ontario Energy Board to better continue the traditions of service to the community and to the future.

We all know the importance of energy in our homes, in our communities and in the markets that keep this community strong. In reflecting, I heard the Premier respond today to a question from the NDP member from Sault Ste Marie that he understands the importance of the marketplace and the place of energy in that.

I do want say that over the last few months and years I've actually participated on some of the energy issues and find myself being far more educated on the issues, but I believe the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, perhaps the next speaker for the opposition party, has a greater history in this, and I'm very eager to listen to his response to Bill 23.

Some listening tonight would know that the MacDonald commission started to analyze the role of all the stakeholders—the generators, the transmission, the distribution and the regulators of the energy market—and realized that we had been in every respect subsidizing energy for many years. The select committee on nuclear looked at that generation component and the arguments, the capital commitments and the investments over time in that area, and we're seeing that play its way out now.

Certainly under Bill 35, and the role of the generators, the transmitters and other stakeholders in the community, and with Mr Gilchrist's significant work in the creation of alternative new, sustainable energy forms, there's more work to be done, which emphasizes the strengthened role and the necessarily strengthening role of the Ontario Energy Board.

I believe this government, under Minister John Baird and the leadership of Premier Eves, is on the road ahead, is on the right track. Having a strong regulatory body like the Ontario Energy Board under the able and respected leadership of the new incoming chair, Howard Wetston, I believe the consumers will be the winners at the end of the day as we restructure the issues around energy and the price of energy that consumers, businesses and individuals pay.

I urge all members to listen, to examine Bill 23 closely and to recognize that it's the right thing to do. We've just got to take the time to understand that now is the time to move forward on this very important establishment of the Ontario Energy Board for the consumers of this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Questions or comments?

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, and I certainly know

one of the reasons we're here tonight discussing this piece of legislation—and I'm sure you're well aware and many members of this House are—because last September or late August, in our mail in our constituencies we received a letter from Union Gas. It said, "We're putting through an application, and think we're going to get approval of it in a couple of weeks, to get a retroactive rate increase for gas that was consumed by gas consumers in your constituency two years ago. We just want to let you know that this is what we're doing."

I immediately wrote the past chair—who has been mentioned here, and who I think had done a good job on the energy board—and certainly the Premier about this, understanding exactly what the reaction was going to be. Within a few months, as people got their notices through their gas bills that this company, unlike any other consumer provision company, was able to charge for a product that was consumed and paid for in good faith at an approved and agreed-upon price by this government agency—to be able to come back and retroactively charge again for that product just got people so angry. That provision should be absolutely struck out of the board's mandate. That never, ever should be allowed to happen again.

The companies need to come before the board and plead their case as to exactly what they should be charging for the product. The rate should be set by the board for all the people of Ontario, and that is it. Once the people have consumed and paid for that product, never again should the board approve a retroactive rate increase for those gas companies to go back and get more money for that product.

Ironically, Union Gas is owned by a very large multinational company in the United States that made a multi-billion dollar profit last year, that didn't need this extra money at all, only to enrich Duke Energy, only to enrich their shareholders' pockets. This piece of legislation had better cover that for sure, because that is something that angers the people of Ontario, and I understand that it doesn't.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I'm interested in a couple of comments in regard to the honourable member's speech. As you know, we reported earlier today that yesterday Tony Martin and I were on the commencement of a northern tour in regard to what has happened to the northern economy. We were in the communities of Wawa, White River and Dubreuilville. Some of the comments he makes are interesting, because they really miss the point altogether.

For example, in Wawa, one of the things we heard was from a municipality, which said that when the government made the original changes to the Energy Act, one of the things they did was that they exempted power utility companies from having to pay municipal taxes for infrastructure that they own within a community. For the town of Wawa, that means the power dams they had within their municipal boundaries are now no longer taxable, which means a \$2-million loss of revenue for the municipality as a result of the government basically giving a huge gift to the corporate entities that are now in the

energy market. They said, "You know what? You don't have to pay it." I say, when we have natural gas facilities within our communities, they have to pay municipal taxes on the infrastructure they have.

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It's interesting that the government, in setting up their privatized, deregulated hydro model, basically decided what they were going to do was give those corporations a gift. They say, "You don't have to pay municipal taxes," on the backs of those communities. I think that's rather unfair and unfortunate.

As we go around and talk to communities like Smooth Rock Falls, or operators in Cochrane or White River, wherever it is, they're all saying the same things. Your electricity deregulation and privatization is nothing but a disaster. Talk to the people at River Gold in Wawa. They're saying their hydro prices have gone up to the tune of \$200,000 last year. Talk to the people in Dubreuilville—a 75% increase in power bills. They can't afford to operate at those costs, and they're laying people off. It's nothing but an unmitigated disaster.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, Government House Leader): I listened with great interest, as I always do, to the member for Durham. The member for Durham is always interested in energy issues. He represents probably one of the largest energy-generation facilities in North America, the Darlington nuclear plant, and takes a huge interest in the energy side of the equation. He looks after worker health and safety issues, he is concerned about the other Pickering initiative, and he pays a lot of attention to this. I've been impressed with the member and his interest in consumer protection. He's always looking out, whether it's for the residential consumer, someone who operates a small business or an industrial consumer. He has a substantial amount of experience as an executive at General Motors, and they are of course one of Ontario's biggest electricity consumers.

Whether it's the residential customer or General Motors, they depend on a regulatory regime that is a fair balance between consumer interests and return on investment that's fair and reasonable. The Ontario Energy Board, much as my colleague suggested, has to be that marketplace, in place of a market where it operates as a monopoly. Of course, it has to be there to provide consumer protection and ensure that the market rules are followed. The honourable member's remarks are a good contribution to this debate.

I say this because I am awaiting with great interest the speech from my colleague from eastern Ontario, Mr Conway. I'm awaiting his remarks. I hope he's going to look at this great bill and want to support it at second reading.

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): I am happy to have an opportunity to make some comment on this bill this evening. I have to say that in my constituency office, energy issues certainly did consume a great deal of energy on the part of my staff.

Three of the areas that were of great concern in Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington were around consumer protection, and I would say to the minister and to the members of the government that you are late with this. It's like locking the barn door after the horse is out. Folks in my riding were fooled, duped and persuaded to sign agreements that were not in their best interests, and then those folks ended up calling a number of people, and many of them called my office for assistance to try and get out of those deals. So I think now consumers are more wary of who they allow into their home and what they sign, before they do that.

Another concern that I hear a great deal about in my office is delivery charges for energy. I had a gentleman send me his hydro bill. The actual energy charge on his bill was \$69, and his total bill was \$159. The difference was made up of interest charges, various taxes and delivery charges.

The third issue that I hear a great deal about in my riding was when the natural gas company sent its customers notification that they would be responsible for retroactive payments. People believe that this is bad-faith business, that they had paid their bills in good faith with an understanding that that was what they owed, only to find out some time later that they were going to be billed again for that energy. There is no protection in this act to address that or some of the other concerns of folks in my riding that I've mentioned. I hope the government is paying attention to that tonight.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr O'Toole: I do appreciate the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane as well as the members from Timmins-James Bay and Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington and of course, very respectfully, the Minister of Energy here listening to this important debate tonight—always on the job; the lights are always on. Actually, he's burning a bit too much energy.

The two issues I heard in the response were the retroactivity charge as well as the consumer protection. Both of these issues are strongly addressed in this legislation.

I think it's important to address the retroactivity issue. I think it's important, because I am looking at Bill 23. In the bill it says it is to protect consumers from excessive rate impact of retroactive charges. Bill 23 would require that every three months the board order how and whether amounts recorded in deferral or variance accounts must be reflected in gas or electricity commodity rates. So I'm pleased with those comments, that the members opposite will be supporting, as I understand it, Bill 23.

Being that their role is to be in opposition, I understand that they'll raise lots of issues. But the minister has said repeatedly that this bill technically is a consumer protection bill. I do want to conclude in the few remarks remaining that the member from Hastings-Frontenac mentioned consumer protection as well. I think the minister addressed it in his remarks, and certainly last night.

Many of the remarks I was asked to make tonight dealt with consumer protection.

In my final remark, I served on a couple of committees with Floyd Laughren when he was a member

here. He then went on to serve in a very difficult time on the Ontario Energy Board. I'd like to publicly say that I know and respect Floyd. In the role and in the time he was there, I think he did a yeoman's job. I look forward to Howard Wetston. Out of respect, I think we should thank these people who serve the public for that.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I'm pleased to join the second reading debate of Bill 23, an act respecting the Ontario Energy Board Act. I hope I will be excused somewhat if, in my remarks tonight, I reflect on a debate just about this time of year five years ago. My friend from Durham, Mr O'Toole, will remember when we were last seized of this matter with Bill 35, the so-called Energy Competition Act.

I want to say to the Minister of Energy, who's here tonight and who asked earlier this evening during the break where my colleagues were with this bill, that quite frankly my colleagues have some concerns about the bill; to be truthful, not so much about the mechanics of the bill, although there are some issues there, but as to the will of this government insofar as carrying out the stated intentions of the bill.

You might say, "Well, why such skepticism?" Well, I think the skepticism is justified on the basis of what was promised five years ago when we last dealt with this matter and all of the misery and pain and misadventure that has been foisted on unsuspecting electricity consumers in the intervening five years.

Let me say fairly and honestly to the government and to my colleagues in the opposition, it would not be a fair or reasonable thing to blame it all on the government, because in some respects there were aspects that no fair-minded, not even clairvoyant, individual could have imagined.

But I listened to some of the earlier speakers this evening, and I have acquainted myself with the debate of yesterday, when second reading began on this particular legislation, the Ontario Energy Board Consumer Protection and Governance Act, 2003. I must say that some of what I heard earlier tonight and read from yesterday's debate is precisely that which was promised five years ago. To many consumers, sad to say, we promised the moon and we delivered a thin slice of rancid cheese. I hope and I pray that we will have a better batting average going forward. I'm not going to be here to assess it, but I do expect that members on both sides of the aisle here tonight—at least some of them—will be here three to five years forward, when perhaps you will be reviewing this again.

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Let me say generally, but let me say directly, to all my friends on both sides of the aisle, the electricity question specifically is going to follow you, is going to challenge you, is going to haunt you, is going to bedevil you for as many months and several years into the future as I can imagine. I wish it were otherwise. I hope I am wrong. I cannot imagine a file that is going to be more important and more difficult for the provincial government in On-

tario and the provincial Legislature than the electricity file in the next few years.

I reflect tonight, as I look at the intent of Bill 23, on where we were five or six years ago, when the then-Harris government endeavoured to meet the challenge of the electricity sector. I want to say this tonight: the essential problems that confronted Mike Harris, Ernie Eves and Jim Wilson in 1996-97—and you will all remember, those of you who were here, the conditions in August 1997. Remember those days? I think it was August 12. There was a big press conference. Bill Farlinger, the then-chairman of Ontario Hydro, was calling people together and saying, “It’s a mess. It’s a bigger mess than you could imagine.” The nuclear power division of Ontario Hydro, which at the time represented over 50% of the generating capacity of Ontario’s electricity system, was in dire straits. Mr Farlinger said at the time, quite remarkably, that the place was run by a “nuclear cult.” He said that we couldn’t continue. The old order was at an end, and the economic and social well-being of the province was in jeopardy if we did not make serious and structural change.

I would not have used the language that Mr Farlinger used, and I think there was, to use the language of today, a certain torquing of the problem. But make no mistake about it, a real and serious problem existed then, and in my view it is no less serious, no less pressing and no less challenging today than it was then.

I think it is useful to recall what the basic challenge is. The basic problem we’ve got in the electricity system, which the Ontario Energy Board—approved by Bill 23, apparently—is going to manage and supervise and regulate, is supply. We are confronted this summer with the prospect of several emergency generators being set up in eight or nine communities across Ontario—the last time I checked, at a cost estimated to be something in the neighbourhood of \$100 million—to give us a standby emergency capacity if, as and when they’re all installed, of something slightly more than 405 or 410 megawatts.

That is where we are today. We are at a point today where we need to put in place emergency natural-gas-fired generators in places like Kitchener and other communities—Toronto—to keep the lights on should we face, as some predict we might under certain conditions, power shortages to the point of brownout or blackout. That’s where we are.

Now, I can’t honestly stand here, and I don’t intend to stand here tonight, and say to my colleagues or to the viewing audience that I have any magical answers; I don’t. And you know what? There aren’t any. All of us and all of you are going to have to come to terms with that reality. This is a debate—and I’ll be saying this probably for the last time—that has been driven by altogether too much faith, hope, ideology and theology and, in my view, not enough honest, hard-headed practical reality. I can understand, Catholic that I am, the interest in and the predilection to faith, hope and whatever else.

Hon Mr Baird: Ideology and theology.

Mr Conway: The minister says “ideology and theology.” That’s not what I said in this particular sentence.

On Saturday night I watched Robert K. Rae, QC, being interviewed by Graham Richardson on Focus Ontario. I don’t know how many of you saw the interview. I don’t know whether my friends from Sault Ste Marie and Timmins-James Bay saw the interview. It is obvious that former Premier Rae is now unencumbered by the burdens of office and, being the Pearsonian Liberal that he always has been, basically told Mr Richardson and the viewing audience what he thought. What did he say? “I don’t think it’s a good idea to subsidize hydro rates. I mean, that’s just dumb. It’s dumb public policy, and to extend it for two or three years makes absolutely no sense.”

Hon Ernie Hardeman (Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): If the Bob Rae government had done that, we wouldn’t have had that debt.

Mr Conway: Well, my friend from Oxford says that if every government had done it, we wouldn’t have the terrible debt. More on that in a moment.

Again, Mr Rae on Focus Ontario on Saturday night says, “Well, right now the big problem here in Ontario is supply.” He goes on to basically say, “We don’t have enough domestic supply.” In fairness to Mr Gilchrist in the debate last night, as I read the Hansard, he made a reference to that as well, the importance of domestic, Ontario-based electricity supply. That’s the challenge; make no mistake about it. That’s over 50%, or at least 50%, of the cost of a typical hydro bill, the cost of producing the electricity. In terms of Ontario’s current situation, a lot of our trouble and most of our debt arises out of a very substantial nuclear power commitment that, while not all bad, certainly turned out to be a lot more complicated and challenging than anyone ever imagined.

But I want to—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr Conway: I want to say to anybody who cares to listen—and I don’t mean to be difficult, because I know we’re going to be out of here, and I’m going to be out of here for good soon—that the challenge we are going to face is the supply challenge, and it is a very serious one. Our friend from Niagara Falls is here tonight and he, like several others I know, is aggressively championing Beck 3. Good for him. That, I think, will give us, if we’re lucky, 600 or 700 megawatts of hydroelectric power. I haven’t checked those numbers lately. They may be off a bit.

The Independent Market Operator told us a few weeks ago that in the next 10 to 12 years we in Ontario are going to require—get this—between 10,000 and 15,000 megawatts of electricity basically to replace a lot of supply that’s going to go out of service in that next decade or decade and a half, and that does not take into account the growth pressures that are there, happily, because we’re a growing province with a growing economy.

Ten thousand to 15,000 megawatts of new electricity capacity. Where are we going to get that? That’s what the

energy board, newly mandated with the passage of Bill 23, is supposed to regulate. Where are we going to get that, my friends?

I read with some interest two articles.

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): Windmills.

Mr Conway: Did my friend from Lambton say "windmills"? Well, let's hope there are going to be windmills. I do. I agree with those, and I think maybe Mr Gilchrist said it last night. I have said for some time that I think there should be a mandated renewable portfolio standard in Ontario's electricity policy, as there is in many other jurisdictions in North America and in western Europe. I hope windmills are an important part of that renewable portfolio standard.

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Let me give you one example. How many of you have driven the Lakeshore recently and have seen the windmill operated, I think, by Toronto Hydro out on the west side of Toronto? The last time I checked, Toronto Hydro—and I might stand corrected but I don't think I'm wrong on this—said they were putting power into the grid from that windmill at between nine and 11 cents a kilowatt hour. We are asking and expecting consumers today to pay a rate of 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour.

Windmills: I say to my friend from Oxford, absolutely. How could I, of all people, be opposed to wind power? But wind power at a price of nine to 11 cents a kilowatt hour? What's the shopkeeper in Pembroke, the farmer in Lambton or the lawyer in Nepean going to say when he or she sees 4- or 5-cent power replaced by 10-cent power, even if it is as virtuous as wind power? I will say as well, there is a niche market out there that will pay a premium price.

Let us not kid ourselves. Ernie Eves went to Mississauga last November to offer up the cap of 4.3 cents because he felt what all of us politicians felt through the summer and fall of last year: he felt the real and pressing political pain of price. That's why Mr Eves did what I suspect just about any leader of any government in Ontario would have done a version of at that time. It was, I think, about price.

Mr Speaker, I read with interest your comments last night about Wawa and the franchise area of Great Lakes Power, where you have observed and other members have observed that in the last year, the transmission and distribution part of the consumer bill for those 11,000 or 12,000 consumers served by Great Lakes Power, a private power company that's been in business in this province for nearly a century up in places like Wawa, Dubreuilville and Algoma district, has increased—by what?—50%, 60%, 70%. Some relief offered in recent times, to be sure, but let me tell you, I see where the Wawa Legion—did you tell us last night, Mr Speaker?—now has a monthly electricity bill of \$3,200. For those of you who know service clubs in small towns or large cities, can you imagine a service club like a Legion in a small community with a monthly electricity bill of 3,200 bucks? I'll bet you it's nearly double what it was not too long ago. For that service club, I am sure it is a real and

pressing challenge as to whether or not they're even going to be able to stay in business.

I just reviewed today where we are after 11 months of the so-called open market. And remember what we're talking about here tonight. We're talking about a regulator that's going to protect consumers, particularly around price, service, transparency—all of those good things. I read the minister's speech last night. It's hard to imagine that anybody could be opposed to the good intentions and the words that give effect to those good intentions.

But Jim Wilson said most of that, maybe not as well, five years ago: "Pass Bill 35, and I'm telling you, folks, service is going to improve, rates are going to go down, Hydro debt is going to go down, albeit slowly, and we're going to get all kinds of exciting good things happening in the electricity sector." I remember thinking, and I think I said on more than one occasion, "Minister, you're being too optimistic. I hope you're right. But how do you think price can go down when we start to layer into this electricity bill new charges and new taxes?" That's what you have to do to make this a level playing field.

My friend Mrs Dombrowsky commented a moment ago about the bill. Let me digress again. I got a bill for my cottage the other day.

Interjection: You have a cottage?

Mr Conway: I have a cottage. Foolish me, I have a cottage that is electrically heated.

Interjections.

Mr Conway: That's right. My bill for the period of March, April and May 2003, with a slight credit of \$5.25, \$398; price of electricity \$166. The commodity charge is roughly 40% of the bill. I can imagine a senior citizen or someone who is not paid as good a salary as I am to understand these things—not that I understand a hell of a lot—looking at this and seeing cost for the electricity, 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour for this period, \$166; basic service charge, \$98; charge by volume, \$30.18; transmission charge, \$57.02; debt retirement charge, \$24.85; GST, \$26.38. You know, \$240 of a \$400 bill has nothing to do with the actual cost of the electricity. There are many of my constituents who would look at that and be puzzled, if not upset. I think all of us have had that experience.

Now, there are benefits, I think, with the so-called unbundled bill. We now see that there is a debt and it's got to be paid off. I personally like the idea of the debt service charge sitting out there as evidently as it does. But in the absence of my friend Jim Wilson, I have to say, sadly, that the stranded debt of Ontario Hydro has gone up by—I'm guessing, and I think very fairly—in excess of a billion dollars. At the point of disaggregation, the break-up of the old vertical company Ontario Hydro, on April 1, 1999, if my memory serves me correctly, the stranded debt was something in the range of \$19.5 billion—

Hon Mr Baird: Twenty and a half.

Mr Conway: —or \$20.5 billion. It has gone up by—the auditor, the last time I checked, reckoned it was at that time \$700 million. And you know what, folks? Our

cap, after 13 months, has added, at least for the moment, another \$600 million to what I will call stranded debt. Now, people will say, "Not to worry. That's going to come down over the next year or two because more supply is coming into the system and that will produce downward pressure on price. Well, I'm a prayerful, hopeful kind of guy, and I hope it's true. All I know is that at the end of 13 months, the rate cap has added \$600 million dollars of additional debt to the public account of the province of Ontario. By very conservative accounting, we are now looking at accrued debt that has risen, I'm guessing now, to somewhere close to \$21 billion. That was not the plan, and I'm not here saying that there were bad people trying to figure out how to do that to make it worse, not better.

One of the things I've learned after a long period of time with this energy business is that you'd better have a balanced approach and you'd better be a little bit from Missouri, because something is going to happen to you that you just didn't plan.

To that, I want to make a passing reference to two articles that appeared in the press today. One of the articles appeared in the *Globe and Mail* and the other article appeared in the *New York Times*. Interestingly, both of them concerned the subject of natural gas.

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As I say, I've been around this debate for a while, and one of the things I remember listening to five, six, seven or eight years ago, when it was clear that the nuclear option was just turning out to be more complicated, more expensive and more troublesome than any of us imagined—and nobody supported it more openly or consistently than I did. But about nine or 10 years ago it became the fashion for a lot of smart people in the electricity and the energy business to say, "Going forward, the next best hope is natural-gas-fired electricity. Why? Well, we've got lots of natural gas. There's an endless supply of it, it's relatively clean, better than coal, and we've got new technology that allows us to build these combined-cycle plants in a relatively short period of time."

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa West-Nepean): And it was going to be cheap, too, don't forget.

Mr Conway: And it was going to be cheap, absolutely, I say to my friend Judge Guzzo.

Well, there were two articles today. This is from the *New York Times*, Houston, June 16:

"Short Supply of Natural Gas Raises Economic Worries

"The economy has been cool, and so has the spring in much of the country. Nonetheless, the United States is facing its most severe shortage of natural gas in a quarter-century. 'You would have thought that the last big upsurge in prices a couple of years ago was a tremendous wake-up call,' said Gwyn Morgan, chief executive of EnCana, a Canadian company that is the largest independent natural gas producer and storage operator in North America. 'But for most people it was not'" the wake-up call that he had expected.

Just let me read a couple of other things. The article by Simon Romero in today's *New York Times* goes on to say, "With natural gas promoted as a cleaner-burning fuel than oil or coal, nearly all the electric plants built since 1998 are designed to be fired mainly by gas."

Guess what? Demand for natural gas is up sharply, and supply is going in the other direction. Natural gas prices are substantially higher, in some cases nearly twice as high in recent weeks as they were just a year ago, and the prediction from many, including Alan Greenspan, is that they're not going to come down to those levels of recent times in the foreseeable future. Hopefully these experts are wrong, but the clear evidence is that the option for cheap gas-fired electricity generation may be decidedly less available than a lot of very smart people were saying just 10 years ago.

In today's *Globe and Mail* is an article by Patrick Brethour entitled "High Gas Price Seen as Block to Clean Power." Again, just reading a couple of paragraphs: "The soaring price of natural gas threatens to put a chill on the construction of gas-fired plants and," listen to this, folks, "boost the use of coal for electricity generation," in Canada and other places—this all having a negative and deleterious affect on what it is that Kyoto is trying to do; namely, to better manage greenhouse gases.

Quoting Hans Konow, president and chief executive officer of the Canadian Electricity Association, "I think that strategy"—the strategy of a greater reliance on natural-gas-fired electricity—"is gone."

So two articles today, both suggesting that the most attractive option of just a few years ago is probably not as available as we thought it was.

Now, back to our price cap.

Mr Beaubien: No pipeline.

Mr Conway: My friend from Lambton rightly observes that even if you've got the supply, you've got the constraint of transporting it across a continent.

I was struck today by the Premier's comments. I appreciated what he said about an honest effort on all sides to deal with the Great Lakes Power situation. Because I haven't been privy, as the Speaker probably has been, to those discussions, I gather there is some ongoing debate to try to include the franchise area of Great Lakes Power in the rural and remote assistance program.

Interjection.

Mr Conway: Well, good for those folks.

Let's take a look at the latest numbers. You'll be happy to know that as of the last few days, the average blended hourly electricity price in Ontario since market opening May 1, is 6.02 cents a kilowatt hour. We're paying 4.3 cents. The average blended hourly electricity price since May 1 of last year—so we're talking 13 months and a couple of weeks—is 6.02 cents.

The Premier said something interesting today in question period. He said, and I don't blame him for saying it, "Hey, folks, the good news is yesterday the price was around 3.8 cents a kilowatt hour," I think he said.

Hon Mr Baird: This month.

Mr Conway: This month.

Well, I hate to tell the minister, do you know what it was about this time last year?

Hon Mr Baird: Three point eight cents.

Mr Conway: I think it was lower than 3.8 cents. I think if you check, it was down around 3.3 cents, 3.5 cents.

Hon Mr Baird: Three point eight cents.

Mr Conway: Well, I will check, but I remember looking very carefully at those.

This is a trough, folks. That price should be troughing now. We have had a very, very cool, wet April, May and early June.

Interjection: No need for air conditioning.

Mr Conway: Very little need for air conditioning.

Listen to these prices. In May, the blended price was 4.51 cents. In April, it was 6.16 cents. In this past March, the blended hourly price was 8.48 cents. In February, it was 8.86 cents. So we had months where we were actually paying about 50% of the actual price to produce the power. That's the reality of year one. So I say to the energy board, good luck.

I noticed in the debate last night that the Minister of Energy took some time to research my remarks in the Bradley committee, one of those sort of old senatorial committees we've got around here, where the senior senator from North Carolina sits there, very chief magistrate-like. We had Wetston in. He's a very impressive guy. I think the government has made a good choice, and I was pleased to see that the minister took as much time to research and recite my remarks of some weeks ago in that committee to the House last night.

I don't want to sound like too much of a whiner, but, you know, I well remember private discussions five or six year ago when some very good friends of the government and some very reputable, public-spirited individuals said, "Hey, gang, if you want to open this market, you better do a couple of things. You better change the regulatory environment over at the energy board. That's going to involve a different kind of person with a different kind of resource." Boy, that Marie Rounding was one very smart woman. Why did she leave us, I ask, parenthetically? One very, very able woman, having done a great job in that position, and she left. I think I know why she left. That was then, and this is now. All I'm saying is, Howard Wetston is a very able guy, but you know what? So was Marie Rounding.

It was only last year when my friend Colle, who always does these things in a more diplomatic way than I, observed—

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Mike Colle?

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Mr Conway: The member from Eglinton-Lawrence, I mean. He observed, "What were the staffing resources of this new electricity-natural gas watchdog?" This is now two or three years in the new order of things. What did my friend Colle discover? The energy board had four investigators and eight people at the call centre. There

are, folks, over four million residential electricity accounts in the province. I don't need to tell my friends on both sides of the aisle: when we loosed those very, very interesting electricity marketers on unsuspecting grandparents and other consumers, you know what happened. The phones lit up in your office, my office, and, if you could ever get through to anybody at the energy board, at the energy board as well.

You know, the thing I like about Judge Guzzo is he's a very knowledgeable sports personality. He knows that if you're going to have a good football game, you'd better have clear rules and a darned good referee. Our problem was that we put the Leafs and the Senators on the ice with no clear rules, and the referee only showed up at the end of the second period. It didn't work. We have had, regrettably, a serious loss of credibility in the marketplace as a result.

I noticed last night that our friend the minister was at some pains to say nice things about our old pal the former member from Nickel Belt, Mr Laughren. I think it is an appropriate thing that nice things were said by the now-Minister of Energy about Mr Laughren.

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): He's my old friend.

Mr Conway: Mrs Marland, the doyenne of this place, says, "He was my friend too." As usual, Margaret's instinct is always generous and very warm-hearted.

What did Ernie Eves say last November to Southam News? And, Margaret, Ernie was and still is, I think, a friend of Mr Laughren. I know something about the circumstances that gave rise to that appointment, and I don't think it was divine intervention that caused it to happen. But what did Mr Eves say to Southam News on November 8, 2002, as reported by April Lindgren? Premier Eves went on to charge that, "The Ontario Energy Board, who were supposed to protect consumers in the province of Ontario—that is their primary function—under the leadership of that great socialist Floyd Laughren, have sometimes seemed to protect producers and distributors more than they have consumers." It was not surprising that a few hours or a few days later, our friend Floyd simply said, "I think I'll retire."

So I was pleased to see the minister last night saying nice things, as Margaret Marland would say nice things, about Floyd Laughren, if not her old and close friend Bernie Ostry—your greatest achievement, Margaret. I will go to my grave, I tell you, I will happily pay taxes for the rest of my days to the province, if only for that. Anyway, I digress.

Yes, we can have good people, very good people like Howard Wetston, but what is the capacity of the board and what is the will of the government to actually deliver the goods? What would I make of the government of Ontario as a senior citizen?

I remember one night a few years ago being summoned to Beachburg, a wonderful little community in my constituency, and there were a whole bunch of senior citizens who had just had the marketers blow through town. Interestingly, the worst of the lot were representing

Hydro One. I'm telling you, those dear souls were worked over in the most unbelievable fashion possible. If that wasn't bad enough, when they went to seek redress from government agencies, it was even more discomfiting.

We were going to do a whole bunch of things then. We didn't quite deliver. We took on a lot. The minister says, "I want to know, Conway, what's your disposition to Bill 23?" I have to say I've been there. I've stuck my neck out further than most people because, trust me, I say to both sides of the aisle, this is a really interesting challenge. This is grade 12; this is calculus, this is the hard chemistry, this is going to keep you up at night and it ain't going to go away. I have walked this walk longer and further than most of you, and I've got many more sins of both omission and commission than you do. The longer I'm around, the more skeptical and the more questioning I become.

Let me digress again. I read last Thursday in the Toronto Star an article that sent me through the roof. I'm telling you, I just cannot—and I have to be careful because I'm probably going to use some lumberyard or locker-room language that will get me in real trouble. A headline in the Star of last Thursday—"Pickering A Failure of Planning: Official."

Let me read a couple of paragraphs:

"Ontario Power Generation neglected to do basic planning for its project to restart the troubled Pickering A nuclear generating station, says the company's nuclear chief operating officer.

"Pierre Charlebois told the annual meeting of the Canadian Nuclear Society that performance at Pickering A, which is \$1.2 billion over budget and three years behind schedule, is"—to quote the chief nuclear officer of our company, I say to Howard Hampton—"very disappointing."

"The latest cost estimate for returning the station's four reactors to service is" not the \$800 million we were told six years ago, but "\$2.5 billion," and rising. But there's more. Quoting Charlebois again, the nuclear chief operating officer at OPG:

"We did not structure this project properly as a project with a project execution plan and scope and controls around that," he acknowledged.

"And we did not structure it in such a way that we had an integrated approach to control of the engineering and the assessment.... Much of that paperwork was incomplete or misfiled."

I want to say, particularly to my friends in the NDP, that's our company. We can howl and yell at great length, and we should, "That's Brascan." Hey, folks, this is us, this is our company. It is one shareholder, us, and it was the very thing that brought us to our knees six years ago. People like myself and Laughren and O'Toole, we sat there—and John has an excuse; he wasn't there like some of the rest of us in the 1970s and 1980s, when this was the magical solution. I repeat, it wasn't all bad; it was just a lot more complicated, apparently, to manage and make work and fix up than we were ever led to

believe. But having been through all of that, having been brought to the absolute brink of whatever, in 1997 we are told what? "Listen, we don't have the resources to fix them all up. We, the government of Ontario, our company, are going to rehabilitate Pickering A and we're going to, with your blessing hopefully, committee, Legislature, farm out that Bruce project to a third party."

We reluctantly, all of us, agreed. I think in retrospect it was a good decision. But our company was going to take two or three years, spend 800 million bucks and by the year 2001 have the four units at Pickering A back on-line. Trust me, we need it. We took off-line in 1997 something like 16% or 17% of the baseload capacity of Ontario's electricity system to fix it up. We took away, we took out of production 4,600 megawatts of, I think all of it, baseload supply—not windmills, not hydroelectric stations—the draft horses that run this system 24 hours a day.

The deal we were offered, and with a fairly high degree of assurance from our company and its managers, was, "We'll get those four units at Pickering A back on-line by about 2001 for a cost something a little less than a billion bucks." Today is June 17, 2003. What have we got? We do not yet have any one of those units—hopefully we'll have unit 4 soon. But isn't that always the way? "It's just tomorrow, Minister; it's just next week, Legislature."

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Of course Mr Charlebois has never come to the energy board or to a public panel; he'll probably go to the Barnes Group. But I read in last week's Star that it's just been a gol darn boondoggle. Well folks, that's the juice that's to get us through the night: 4.3-cent power with this kind of operation? I don't mean to be difficult. I feel like my integrity is on the line. Many of you weren't there. I listened to the evidence. I bought the story one last time. And I looked like a fool. Do you know who actually looks good on this? Norm Sterling and the Deputy Minister of Finance, Mike Gourley. They were people who said, "You know, I think you need to do more due diligence. I think there are other questions." They got the back of the hand and away we went. Here we are. I hope and pray that it's going to get fixed.

The energy board? Good people, good mandate. I guess one of my questions is what the hell are they going to be supervising if we don't solve some of these problems? I repeat, we are 13 months into this market and we have spent—well, if you take money out of the market mitigation plan, I guess it's close to \$2 billion, to kind of subsidize rates through a very difficult year. But netting out of that is at least \$600 million that's been added to the debt.

So I say to my friend the minister, I hope it works. You've heard from my colleagues Pat Hoy, Dwight Duncan and others, and my friend Ramsay just a moment ago said that a lot of consumers are very, very angry about the retroactive charges, and the bill appears to deal with that. I think that's a good thing. I hope it works.

There is some concern. I see in my file some correspondence from the Ontario Public Service Employees

Union. They make a very good point about being careful. They observe that you've got pay for performance in a crown agency that is now going to basically pay for its operation by the fees and other income it generates as a referee. OPSEU makes a good point. If you want the referee on the ice, depending on his or her salary, for the number of fines that he or she assigns, it's a fair question. I presume that there are ways to deal with that. But make no mistake about it: I don't care how good the referee is, we've had good referees before. Again, I say to the minister, Bill 35—you just couldn't have more power. I don't want to bore you with it, but boy did you give yourselves sweeping regulatory power. In fact, I could argue that, in most respects, Bill 23 is redundant. One of the things, actually, that this Tory party has done—

Mr Beaubien: Be nice.

Mr Conway: Well no, I think I'm trying to be factual. It's a tendency that's showing up in other parliamentary systems as well, which is, "Let's just pass the big omnibus bill." Nutrient management is one of my favourites. It's all about good intentions, details to be worked out in the regulations. Well you know, I was the minister once. God, I remember when my back was to the wall, having to massage Norm Sterling's famous bill—you know that separate school bill? Boy, the regulations under Section 10 of the old Education Act got me through a long, dark night. I have a feeling that when the Legislature passed that bill, it never really intended that entitlement, but I don't know that for sure.

The question I have is how are you going to meet the supply challenge?

Interjection: That's the whole issue.

Mr Conway: The whole issue, my friend from Kingston says, and it isn't going to be easy. You know I'm always reminded that George Bush went to the White House and basically said, "I'm not Bill Clinton and I'm not even daddy. You know what? I am not going to spend as much time as recent presidents obsessing about Palestine." I think George Bush has found out that you can't be President of the only superpower and not spend a lot of your time on Palestine.

Well, I've got some sad news for members of the Ontario government and the Ontario Legislature: you can't be here and in this business without confronting the reality of Hydro, as we used to call it. It is the lymphatic system of one of the great economies of the developed world, and it's in trouble. It's in trouble. Not, I think, unsolvable trouble, but remember again what happened a year ago.

I'll never forget that scene out in Mississauga. There was my pal Ernie and that nice couple. They seemed like a very nice young couple—bright, with I think a couple of kids and I'm guessing about a 2,500-square-foot home someplace in Mississauga.

Hon Mr Baird: It was bigger than that.

Mr Conway: It was bigger than that? All right; fair ball. Ernie was there saying, "Ah, relief. Relief at last." Then discussion ensued, and I remember at the end that

one of the couple said, "Thank God. We can now keep the Christmas lights on."

I just wanted to weep. I thought, "My guess is, you can keep the Christmas lights on forever. I want to know, is there air conditioning in that house? Has anybody talked to you about what it costs to air-condition a 2,800- or 1,900-square-foot house on a very hot summer and fall for hours, days and weeks at a time?" I suspect nobody has, and I suspect that, like a lot of us, that bright young couple with kids and a mortgage and two jobs has more to worry about than figuring that stuff out.

Somebody said earlier in this debate that public information is an important part of this. You bet, it's important. You tell farmers—and you don't generally have to tell them this. They know that when the water gets low in the well, you start to change your behaviour, of necessity. Well, folks, thinking about electricity, there isn't much water in our well. We are behaving as though we are sitting on one of the great springs of history. We ain't. We have a lifestyle now that suggests we can't operate, we can't live, we can't work in southern Ontario without air conditioning most of the time, and even in here tonight it feels air-conditioned. I assume it's hot and humid outside. I want to say to the audience that, thanks to you, it's cool and comfortable in this chamber tonight, and it's not just the presence of our friend the sheriff from Brockville.

But I'm serious. There is not much water in the well. Bob Rae said it the other night. I forget his words. How do you suppose you're going to get people to conserve if we have a pricing regime that simply insulates them from any kind of reality?

Don't misunderstand me. You're all running for re-election; I'm not. I understand the pressure to avoid pain and to encourage pleasure, particularly as you get close to an election, but conservation without any kind of price signals? Again, I say to my Liberal friends as well as my New Democratic colleagues and my Tory relatives and associates, let's look at the options.

Chrétien has a good line. He likes to say on occasion, "People want to go to heaven, but nobody wants to die first."

We know that there are nuclear problems. Apparently, according to the New York Times and the Globe and Mail today, natural gas is both more limited in availability, at least the cheap stuff, and more expensive. By the way, I think it now takes, to bring natural-gas-fired electricity on-line, something like six and a half cents a kilowatt hour. I think that's roughly the number. Hydro-electric comes into the grid at around two or two and a half cents. Coal—John, help me. About four cents? Three and a half or four, depending on how dirty it is. Nuclear—well, that's always the great mystery, but we price it, I think, around four or five, with a fair bit of the bill being parked on some siding.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): A lot of the bill in the future.

Mr Conway: Of course. My friend Bradley says, "A lot of the bill in the future," and he's right. Of that \$21-

billion stranded debt, make no mistake, a big whack of that, the largest chunk of it, I'm sure, has to do with the nuclear commitment, but you can thank your lucky stars that Darlington is down there just running 24 hours a day. I was part of a group that was not going to complete Darlington, but we did, for reasons that I don't need to get into tonight.

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I don't care who the government is—and I want to say again in an ecumenical way to my NDP friends, I've been reading Howie's book. The way I read the book, the leader of the NDP is certainly recognizing that prices have to go up. He's not opposed to private power.

Do you know, for example, that something like \$3 billion, \$4 billion or \$5 billion of our stranded debt has to do with the non-utility generation agreements of the late 1980s and the early 1990s? Let me repeat: of that \$21-billion stranded debt, something like \$3 billion, \$4 billion or \$5 billion has to do with that very well-intentioned experiment in private power, but it was mom-and-pop private power called non-utility generation. Much of it was done, happily, with good intent, by the NDP and has ended up producing a very different kind of financial reality than that which was imagined 10 and 12 years ago. I see my friend from Sault Ste Marie looks a bit incredulous, but I think I'm correct on that.

But the question remains, when we peak now, we need 25,000 megawatts. Last August 13, we hit an all-time summer peak of 25,414 megawatts. This past January 22, we peaked at 24,145 megawatts. I'm not sure that the latter—I think the one last August is an all-time peak, but we're in the neighbourhood of 25,000 megawatts. Remember what I said half an hour ago? You need, in the next 10, 12 years, at least 10,000, probably 15,000 megawatts just basically to replace what you've got now. Where, my friends, are you going to get that in a way that is affordable and environmentally acceptable?

We're going to pass a bill here that's all about protecting consumers. I certainly want to protect consumers in the Ottawa Valley and across the province. I think all of us are sensitive to the shocks out there, particularly in a resource economy. Farmers in my area, lumber operators, very large consumers of electricity, some of the shocks they've taken in the last couple of years around the electricity bill are well known.

Yes, we're going to pass Bill 23. I want to know what kind of ice is this regulator, this referee, going to be skating on? How are you going to do it?

Mr Bob Wood (London West): What are the solutions?

Mr Conway: The solutions? Well, I say to my friend from London—

Mr Bradley: You'll steal them.

Mr Conway: Listen, I am not worried, but I tell you it's going to be interesting. If somebody comes to you in the next few years offering to you to be the minister responsible for electricity policy, that's the day you might want to be out.

Interjection.

Mr Conway: Well, the current minister has some work to do. Margaret, I was stunned. Young Baird doesn't know the difference between Hugh Macaulay and Bob Macaulay. I'm not going to tell Hugh that the minister has him mixed up with Bob. That may have been a slip—

Interjection.

Mr Conway: It was probably a slip. But there was a day in this place 40 years ago, let me tell you, when if your name was Robarts or Frost, you would not ever mistake Hugh Macaulay for Bob Macaulay. I can't tell that story publicly, but there was a famous incident involving Bob Macaulay as he exited this place, having been minister of everything but not ultimately the minister of the one job he wanted and the Tory Party was not prepared to give him.

But the answer is going to be a mix of a whole bunch of things, some of which you're not going to like. You're going to have to look at a mix of things. You're going to want to have, I think, some very aggressive demand-management, and it's going to be politically difficult, because you can't go to heaven without some penance first. You better start this public information campaign soon, because the longer it is left, the more difficult it's going to get.

Mr Bradley: Don't give them a reason to advertise.

Mr Conway: My friend Bradley, who tends to obsess about these things, and I think with good cause, makes the point that there's lots of money to advertise around. Some of those health ads, for the life of me, I just don't get. They're so completely banal in their feel-good quality that I don't think you're getting value for money.

Now, the one I saw with Ernie the other night offered seniors the property tax rebate, the mortgage interest deductibility and peace in the education system, in just 30 seconds, and I thought, "Now, that has a nice little bite to it."

Mr Bradley: But did they show Ernie in the ad?

Mr Conway: They did, actually. There was just a flash.

Mr Bradley: Not the latest one.

Mr Conway: The one I saw just before the 11 o'clock news Sunday night on Global Television was actually, I have to say, quite effective. It was almost like those old Davis ads you'd see in the early 1970s. It just wanted to pull you in.

The problem is, the ad is transitory; this thing arrives every month or two. The hydro bill isn't going to go away. So I say in conclusion—

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): Give him another half hour.

Mr Conway: No. I say in conclusion—

Interjection: Unanimous consent.

Mr Conway: I'm here to talk about Bill 23, you understand.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): You have a minute left.

Mr Conway: I have a minute? I've tried to restrain myself. You see, I was at this sale five years ago. I

bought this car, I road tested it, and you know what? On a dark and stormy night someplace between Niagara Falls and Pelham, I was kind of left on the roadside by a promise that didn't quite match performance.

The good thing about our system of government is they come and they go. People like Margaret and Bradley and I are cursed with the memory—and the sheriff, of course, although he's a step apart. Actually, the sheriff had an interesting story in Gananoque this winter which was a little less well-known than Great Lakes Power, but I'll tell you, Gananoque Light and Power certainly produced.

At any rate, the question is, remember the problem that brought us to our knees six years ago? It is no less serious and no less threatening today than it was then; I think it is somewhat worse. Certainly I like Howard Wetston. I think the mandate he has should be a good one. But in the last five or six years, some similarly good people had an almost equally strong mandate, and for whatever reason—a lack of commitment, a lack of will, a lack of resources—promise did not match performance. That's why I resume my seat somewhat skeptical about the rollout of Bill 23.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I have to say that I found the presentation very interesting. It certainly engaged me in some thought. The member certainly makes a very thoughtful argument for caution in front of this issue. I don't think it's as simple as turning it over to the private sector and then washing your hands of it. This is a very complicated and difficult challenge for government. It has been for a long time, and I think the argument he makes that it will be for a long time is correct.

For the government to simply—as it has done with so much of what it's tried to manage over the last eight years—turn this over to the private sector and think that all the problems are going to go away is just not correct. And, in turn, in finding that it's difficult, to turn around and begin to look for scapegoats—like Ontario Hydro and Eleanor Clitheroe or the Ontario Energy Board and Floyd Laughren—is short-sighted, narrow and shallow, to say the least.

There are things that we can do. The member for Renfrew spoke of Howard Hampton's book. I think he called it a treatise on theology at one meeting I was at. But it's certainly a good read, if somebody wants to get—

Mr Bradley: How much does it cost?

Mr Martin: I forget what it costs. I got this one for nothing from Howard.

Interjection: Full value.

Mr Martin: Full value, yes.

I don't know what the cost is, but it's probably available at your local bookstore. It's worth the read if you're interested at all in the history and some of the proposals that we're putting forward. I also recommend for your reading another little book called Public Power that we put out recently, which will also give you some detail as to what we would do in front of this very challenging issue.

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Mrs Marland: I want to use this two minutes to make some comments. I have to read your riding, Sean, because Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke is such a long name. I do want to say, with possibly only six sitting days left in this session, and knowing that this member is not seeking re-election, that you are going to be missed tremendously in this House. In my humble opinion—and I've only watched for 18 of your 28 years in this House—you're the kind of member who has served his constituents in an exemplary manner. But you have also served the whole parliamentary system in this chamber for 28 years in a wonderful way, in my opinion, albeit you have served in a different party than I serve in. But no matter where you have sat in this House, we have all recognized your tremendous intellect and your tremendous oratory skills.

I have always said that when you were speaking, most of us, whatever we were doing, would put it down to sit and listen to you, as we did with the Honourable Robert Nixon, the Honourable Bob Rae—may I say Ian Scott?—and some other people in this House. You've set a very high standard in terms of your service, Sean, and I would personally like to wish you continued health and great success in your future life.

Mr Gerretsen: Much in the same tone as the member from Mississauga just mentioned, I too want to compliment the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. I totally agree with her. He's one of those speakers to whom members who are here in the House, at any given moment while he's giving a speech, listen. I think one of the reasons we listened to him is because, as he did in his hour-long speech on this hydro situation, he did it in a very non-partisan way. He dealt with the issues, with the history of this particular hydro situation over the last 20, 30, 40 years, and particularly the last five or six years. He also presented it in such a way that he didn't claim to have all the answers to this, other than to say that certainly the current answer that's out there, guaranteeing people the rate of 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour, is not the ultimate answer.

I know that his oratory and his passion for this place will be missed in the years to come. There are very few people in this House who can bring the same knowledge and the same dynamic attitude to any issue the way he does. He has a method of delivery and a choice of words which are quite unique in this place.

I too want to congratulate the member and tell him that I can well understand that the issue for the next Parliament, and for years to come, is going to be an issue of supply. That's where the real problem is going to be. I wish him well in his future endeavours, just in case we don't come back here in the fall. It has always been a pleasure listening to the member from Renfrew.

Mr Bisson: To the member from Renfrew and all those other parts to his riding, I don't think this is going to be the last time we will hear him speak—I really don't.

I hate to tell you, Sean, but there's a good chance they're not calling an election this fall, at which point you're going to have to be back here yet again on another

hydro speech, because it's certainly not going to be the last of the issue.

I also want to say that the overall tone of what Mr Conway was talking about was to say, "This is a really tough issue," which it is. But the second part he talked about, as Mr Martin said, is that somehow or other, "We had to throw this into the private sector and let them worry about it. They'll probably figure it out in the end."

I think there are alternatives. My friend Mr Martin pointed out the Public Power book written by Howard. I want to say that I had to pay \$21.95 to get my copy; he got it for free. I've got to talk to Howard tomorrow. This is certainly dissent in the caucus. I got a signed copy and he got a signed copy, so I'm going to go and double-check.

The point I make is that it's actually a really good read, because it talks about the history of where we've gone with public power in this province. If you read the book, it's as we understand, that we've gone through this debate before. We ended up going into the public power system because we originally had a problem, and the problem was that when the private sector was in its heyday, starting up Hydro as we knew it back in the early 1900s, there was chaos. It was bedlam. Prices were different, depending on whether you lived in Niagara Falls or Toronto. There were all kinds of issues, and from a competitive position, Ontario would not fare well inside that private system. So from the time of Adam Beck, it was moved into a public system, and we find ourselves, some 100 years later, having to go back through that debate again.

I think there are solutions. I think a lot of them, as Tony pointed out, are inside the Public Power document. You can find it at www.publicpower.ca. It talks about our vision, as New Democrats, of what you need to do to deal with many of these pressing issues.

Mr Conway: I want to thank the four members who spoke so kindly. Let me just make a couple of quick observations.

I say to Tony Martin, the member for Sault Ste Marie, it's certainly not my intention to scapegoat anybody. I want to be very clear: I think there is an enormously important role for public power. Does it all have to be central public power, run from Toronto and Ontario Hydro, or does local public power in Mississauga, Pembroke, Sault Ste Marie and Kingston have a role to play? And if so, what's the balance?

I personally don't believe that you should eliminate non-public generators from meeting some of that future demand, estimated to be up to 15,000 megawatts in the next 10 or 12 years. But in the public interest, it's going to be very important to bring that private power into the system in some way that meets public objectives.

But I say, as somebody who has more than a bit of sympathy for public power, what do we say about Pickering? This is our company—I want to say lock, stock and barrel, but I really should say tube, tritium and trouble. What are we doing? Why would anybody give us licence to do any more, given our performance around Pickering A? That's not some foreign plutocrat; that's us.

The auditor came to this place a year ago—Ms Martel and the chairman of the committee, Mr Gerretsen, were there—and basically said, "I've looked at the Bruce deal. All things considered, I think it's, broadly speaking, acceptable," and in very diplomatic language he said to us, the owners of Pickering—my words, not his—"You should be going down the road to Pickering and doing a better job of figuring out what it is you want at that huge plant you own and are trying to operate." Just because we support something doesn't simply say we can do anything or have anything done in that connection.

To Margaret and to Mr Gerretsen, I say that you're very kind. Someone once said, "Flattery is fine as long as one does not inhale," and like Bill Clinton, I'll try not to inhale, especially with the sheriff in town.

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The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Maves: It's a pleasure to join in this debate on Bill 23, the proposed Ontario Energy Board Consumer Protection and Governance Act. If you're watching at home and listening to the debate, you'd never know that we are talking about the Ontario Energy Board, but that's OK—it's not really OK by our own rules, but a lot of times, when we get into debate about a variety of issues in this place, members are given wide latitude.

I'm glad to follow the member from the Pembroke area. The Maves family of Niagara Falls—my dad had 16 kids in his family, and they grew up on Drummond Road in Niagara Falls—is a very well known family that I'm proud of. They started out in Pembroke many, many years ago. The first five children, I think, were born there.

This member is an interesting member, and it was interesting to hear some of the comments from the member from Kingston and the Islands and the member for Mississauga West in their two-minute comments, which are traditionally used for taking little digs at members after they've just done their speech or taking exception to what they said. They reserved their comments to compliment this member.

I kind of think of him over the past eight years as the Quasimodo of Queen's Park. He's not listening on the other side. He's the kind of guy who doesn't hang out in the bell tower, but he hangs out in the library and spends a lot of his time reading books, looking at journals and so on. Indeed, he's an excellent orator, I've listened to him speak, and the speakers on this side of the aisle who get the most attention and kind of our own riveting speakers—Mr Stockwell, who has a totally different style, obviously. When Mr Conway gets up to speak, the place is usually quieter, the people tend to pay attention and listen, because he's a very good orator.

But I tell you, I've spent eight years and I've listened to a lot of his comments, and I've noticed that he has a very distinct pattern when he speaks. If anyone cares to go back and have a look at some of his speeches, he takes on that statesman-like air that he puts out there—and that's very good, because that statesman-like air lends you credibility right off the bat—takes on this non-

partisan tone all the time, but he's a very sneakily partisan member. My friend from St Catharines, Mr Bradley, who also has a very statesman-like air and takes on that air quite consciously, is also a very sneakily partisan member quite often.

One other thing that the member uses in his speeches is he always throws in some historical references—that again lends credibility—throws in a reference to a book or a journal—boy, this guy reads; he must be smart—and all of a sudden everything that comes out of his mouth is treated differently. I don't think it always should be. I think that when we have these speeches in this place, you get great marks for style in politics, and actually politics is probably 90% style, but you have to listen for content. Quite often, when the member opposite gives these speeches he ends up being short on content. He has been in this place for many, many years; he has been around for the entire history, for the last 20-some-odd years, of Hydro in Ontario. He's right to say that these aren't new issues, but I've never really seen the Liberal Party or the member opposite come up with any real strong ideas on how to fix this system.

How we ended up here tonight is that when we came into office in 1996, we had the courage to say, "You know what? There are problems in this hydro system. We need to fix the system." We appointed a former Liberal cabinet minister, Donald Macdonald, to go out and do a study on hydro and come back and say what should happen with hydro, what do we do with hydro?

He did a province-wide consultation. I remember attending some of his consultations. I attended them here; I spoke with him personally; I attended some in Welland and the Niagara area. Everybody who attended those things agreed that there were a lot of problems with the hydro system in Ontario. The large power consumers in my riding, in Mr Bradley's riding, and Mr Kormos's riding in Niagara all knew there were big problems with the hydro system. The people who had local distribution systems—people at Welland Hydro and Niagara Falls Hydro and St Catharines Hydro—all said there were problems with Mother Hydro.

Obviously, I have a lot of Ontario Hydro employees in my riding. I have a lot of retired Ontario Hydro employees in my riding. In my riding it's not hydro; it's Mother Hydro. Everyone has known for many, many years that there are a lot of problems. So we said, "Mr Macdonald, here. You do some work for us and give us an indication of where we should go."

He did a report, and he said part of the problem we have, of course, is the huge accumulated debt that is not figuring into the price of power, that we're not truly paying the price of power over the years, that we can brag about the low cost of power we produce at Ontario Hydro but it's because we don't pay off the debt like a normal company would do. When you make a product, you have capital costs that go into that product, and those are always excluded. So we had a large hangover of debt we had to deal with. We had inefficiency. There's no doubt that everybody in Ontario knew Ontario Hydro

was inefficient. The stories people can tell you about inefficiencies at Ontario Hydro and every aspect of it are legion. We needed to do something about that.

So we headed down this road of open competition. That was part of what we were advised to do. Who did we have along with us as we marched down this road? We had the Liberal Party of Ontario marching down this road with us in lockstep; they agreed. The critic for Hydro was Mr Conway. He agreed wholeheartedly every step of the way. In fact, the Liberals voted for our major piece of Hydro legislation, which took us toward competition.

Did they support the open market? Well, here's Sean Conway in a letter. It happened to be an invitation to a \$350-a-person energy sector reception fundraiser for the Liberal Party. He says, "Throughout Ontario's electricity restructuring process, Dalton and the Ontario Liberals have been consistent supporters of the move to an open electricity market in Ontario." It's very clear from that quote; it's very clear from the way they voted. In fact, they voted in favour of one of our bills on second reading; on third reading, they voted against. It shows a bit of their ability to switch positions on an issue.

McGuinty was asked in December of 2001 what he would do about Hydro. McGuinty said, "I think that it's important that we move ahead with competition, both in terms of generation and in terms of transmission." That was when we talked about Hydro One and the private sector.

The members opposite sometimes say we're misquoting people. I turn to Hansard and I find a direct quote from Sean Conway, June 5, 2001: "Let me be clear: we need a competitive marketplace. The electricity market that we as Liberals envisage is one where we see a competitive market in the generation of electricity." So they've been very much in favour of this move to an open market and competition in electricity.

On the other hand, there are times when they've said they're opposed to it. As I said, they voted in favour of one of our electricity restructuring bills on second reading, against on third.

I just gave you some quotes of both Conway and Dalton McGuinty being in favour of an open market. Now there are quotes also out there about him being opposed to an open market. For instance:

McGuinty: "I have been very consistent with respect to Hydro One. I think it should be kept in public hands. I have been very consistent when it comes to generation; there should be competition."

Question: "So you're saying that you were misquoted?"

McGuinty: "If you take a look at the quote, it is a paraphrase...."

The next question to McGuinty: "You are going to cancel the competitive market?" "Yes," is his answer. "And what's left of the remaining competitive market?" "Yes," he says again. "At the wholesale level?" "Yes," says McGuinty. "So that will be gone," a competitive market will be gone under a Liberal government? "Yes."

They stand and lecture and give us historical speeches about Hydro. They complain that the direction we're heading in is wrong, but they never really want to give their solutions to these problems. As a government, you can't just stand and say, "It's too bad," and be critical of direction of different things. You actually have to legislate. You actually have to make decisions. This government has done that. I'm proud of what we've done and how we've moved through electricity, and we're not done.

The member talked about Bruce Energy. I was there when the Provincial Auditor brought in his report on Bruce Energy and the leasing agreement between the government and Bruce Power. I remember the opposition said—because I was a member of the Provincial Auditor committee. They came in, it was their decision, their motion to that committee to have the Provincial Auditor do an audit. This is out of the ordinary. Not very often does the Provincial Auditor get asked by that audit committee to do an audit. He chooses who to do audits of in the government of Ontario. They said, "We want an audit of this deal." When he brought in his report, I remember the Liberals and NDP showing up, rubbing their hands with glee. They couldn't wait. They were salivating. They were going to find something wrong about this dirty deal that the provincial Tories had done with Bruce Energy, a private sector company with regard to Bruce Power. As Mr Conway has said, the auditor came in and gave it a clean bill of health. I watched their faces drop as we spent the first half-hour in camera reading this report. I watched their faces literally drop. There was nothing there for them to be able to go to the public and say, "They did this deal with the private sector, and look how bad the private sector is. Look how they're hurting Ontarians."

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But I saw a little twinkle in Mr Conway's eye, and I knew he had cottoned on to something. What he cottoned on to was a reference in that Provincial Auditor's report that said that the really good part about Bruce Energy and the lease to Bruce Energy was that a private sector company—because we do have shortages and we do have impending and potential shortage of supply in Ontario as our economy continues to grow. The Provincial Auditor said one of the great things about the Bruce deal is that a private company put \$700 million of their own money into refurbishing that plant, and they did it on time and they did it on budget. What Mr Conway caught in this report was a reference where the OPG staff said, "One of the things we like about the Bruce deal is that it frees us up to deal with Pickering."

"Aha," Mr Conway said. "If it has freed you up to deal with Pickering, why is Pickering so far behind and why is it so far over budget?" Great question. That highlighted one of the problems we're trying to deal with, with a competitive marketplace, and that is that historically, Mother Hydro had become incredibly inefficient, as monopolies tend to do. "Hence the reason why we needed to break up Mother Hydro in the first place," said

Donald Macdonald and many others around this province, and why we needed to bring other people in to help us provide more energy.

Mother Hydro—no matter which government has been in charge of it, they have had a great deal of difficulty in wrestling it to the ground and making it more efficient. And they're still not there. Proof of that is Pickering.

I've spoken to my employees, and I have many of them in Niagara Falls, and they'll say, "Well, you know, Bruce was a little different deal than Pickering. There were a few more technical difficulties in Pickering. It was a more difficult job to bring Pickering back up than Bruce." I'll concede you that. Not being an engineer, I can't tell you the truth of that, but I believe some of my employees in Niagara when they tell me that.

But what's clear is that it shouldn't be over a billion dollars over budget and it shouldn't be as late as it is. But part of the reason we need to move to open competition, part of the reason we have to have an open market, is because we need new generation and we have to rely on the private sector, like Bruce Energy did with Bruce Power, to put their money on the table and bring power into our grid. So we're doing that.

I know that the Minister of Energy is working very hard in trying to get a new tunnel in Niagara Falls, something we've worked on for many, many years. Potentially we're looking at a Beck 3 power plant. How else can we get more power on the grid? Well, I have to congratulate Minister Baird for a very aggressive program, a 10-year corporate income tax holiday for people who put their own generation on the grid and build new generation, 100% corporate tax write-offs in the year of acquisition for the cost of newly acquired generation assets, a capital tax exemption for newly acquired generation assets, full retail sales tax rebate for generation building materials and a 10-year property tax holiday for newly created generation assets and compensation to municipalities for lost property tax revenues.

These are great initiatives to drive the private sector to create more energy. Some of those companies I talked about that are in my riding and Mr Bradley's riding and Mr Kormos's riding are large power consumers who said, "Break up Mother Hydro. Bring in competition to the sector." Some of those people still want to build generation. Some of these steps bring it nearer to the reality of a possibility.

So I think those are important concrete steps that we took that we never heard any indication from across the way that those were steps that we should have been taking. We had to make a decision and we did that.

Now, Conway talked about Premier Eves not being happy with the Ontario Energy Board, and not saying nice things once upon a time about Floyd Laughren when he was chair of the energy board. Why was that? Because we had said to the Ontario Energy Board several times that what we wanted them to do was to put some paramount importance on protecting consumers. Clearly, when we opened up the market, when many municipalities had taken over local distribution facilities, they all

applied for rate increases. They all applied for the maximum allowable 9.98% rate increase, and they all seemed to get it. The Ontario Energy Board, without blinking an eye, gave it to them. So hydro distribution rates went up all over the place, in every municipally-owned utility.

Where did those profits go? Well, half of them got divided up and they went through a neat little vehicle: half of them to the coffers of the municipality and half of them usually stayed within that utility as retained earnings to be used, perhaps, for capital reasons or perhaps, at a later date, to be flowed to the municipal coffers. We don't know, but I think Premier Eves was a little disappointed in the way that the Ontario Energy Board had, perhaps, lost its way and hadn't protected consumers, for example, when some of those applications came in.

We're moving now to make this commitment to change the Ontario Energy Board Act, to change the structure a little bit of the Ontario Energy Board, to try to make sure that they always know that protecting consumers will be of paramount importance. I remember in the past, Minister Wilson had to go down a similar road with the Ontario Energy Board when they didn't act in the best interest of consumers and he had to issue directives in the past.

Part of this bill that's before us tonight also deals with the concept of retroactive changes to rates that are given to gas companies, for example. Marcel Beaubien, one of our members, in his riding, where Union Gas applied for and was granted a retroactive rate increase to cover gas costs, was very adamant that this government take action on that issue. In the bill tonight, we are forcing the Ontario Energy Board to deal in more effective and better time frames and to remove some unacceptable lag times in their decision-making so that these retroactive increases don't occur.

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I'm coming to near the end of my time. I appreciate the comments from the member opposite. I always enjoy listening to him, but I always listen closely for that concrete Liberal position on an issue. Maybe some of the members of my party can tell me, maybe the minister can tell me, maybe one of the staff can tell me what the heck Liberal policy is on hydro in Ontario. I know what the NDP position is: it's Public Power. It's to go back to the old "Mother Hydro rules everything; the Ontario Energy Board has no teeth; let's go back to the old system, the way it was; let's continue to rack up debt in the province of Ontario." We know that's their position. We don't agree with it. All of the major power consumers, Donald Macdonald's report, the municipal utilities who went to all those hearings, don't think that's the right way to go; we don't think that's the right way to go. I know the Liberals don't think that's the right way to go, but I don't know what their position is. It would be nice if, in one of those long wonderful speeches that Mr Conway makes, he would take the time to very succinctly spell out the Liberal position on the issue of hydro in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I appreciate the fact that after spending most of his time trying to mount a defence of his government's indefensible energy policy, the member for Niagara Falls did turn to some of the specifics of the bill. There are some aspects of Bill 23 which I wish he had touched on, because I think they deserve some clarification. To me, they are somewhat beyond understanding. I would have asked him some questions, perhaps, about the non-independence of the Ontario Energy Board from government once this bill is passed, but that didn't strike me nearly as much as the fact that in this bill the Ontario Energy Board is going to become self-financing so that the industry participants are going to be funding the regulator itself. It would have been interesting to hear government members explain how you can have what is essentially a rate-setting body in many instances as well as a regulatory body possibly operating when it is being funded by those very same regulators. I think that deserves some explanation.

I would have been interested in hearing the member for Niagara Falls talk a little bit more about this whole issue of the cooling-off period. I happen to think that's an important provision of this bill, that there's an extension of a cooling-off period for individual consumers who have signed contracts either for gas or for electricity from the independent retailers that this government has unleashed upon consumers, who know very little about the representations and sometimes misrepresentations that are being made to them when somebody comes knocking on their door to sell them what is supposed to be cheaper electricity. So I'm glad to see there's some extended cooling-off period—although, talk about trying to close the barn door a little bit after the horse is long gone.

This is just gloss on what is an absolutely disastrous situation. Just on that issue of retailing, do you know who pays for the electricity, who picks up the electricity consumer that those individual retailers that have been freed up by this government when they can't deliver the electricity, particularly at 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour? Do you know who picks up the cost? The municipal utilities, most of whom have now been bought up by Hydro One, so we'll have a huge debt for Hydro One after—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Questions or comments?

Mr Martin: I find it interesting that the member from Niagara Falls, the birthplace of public power actually in the province, would be taking such a stand in support of his government's position on the way that we deliver hydro.

I just want to share with him a very short piece from Howard Hampton's book, *Public Power*, that I think you'll find interesting and maybe whet some appetite for more of the book. Howard says:

"I am at Niagara, downstream from the Falls, studying from a distance the Sir Adam Beck 1 generating station, still as impressive today as it must have been when it was built 80 years ago. Miniature waterfalls flow from the evenly spaced apertures that punctuate its broad expanse.

Behind each of these openings, I know, is a mighty turbine that has already captured the energy of the falling water and delivered it to a transmission network that would, at a marathon per day, take more than two years to traverse. More impressive than these massive works, however, is the idea that gave them birth: the notion that co-operation, not competition, was the better way to light the future."

I suggest, as does Howard in his book, that if we want to offer something to our children, one of the things we could offer them is reliable, safe and affordable hydro to power all those things that they can dream possible in terms of economy, community and our personal lives. I believe that the government, instead of debating this bill, should in fact be solving the hydro problem with our Public Power platform. The Ontario Energy Board should be transformed into a public utilities commission. The commission should regulate the price of power and approve public sector generating projects.

This bill is a misguided attempt to make deregulation better. This is a bit like trying to make better typewriters instead of moving to computers. So I would suggest that the member from Niagara Falls take a look at the history of public power in this province and then rethink his position.

Mr Bradley: I enjoyed the speech from the member for Niagara Falls. I particularly enjoyed it, but I was looking for his reference to what we call Beck 3 in our part of the province. I think, in his heart of hearts, he's been an advocate of it for some time.

Dalton McGuinty and I were standing on the edge of the Niagara River. There was nobody there to push us over; Bart did not arrange for anybody to push us over, but we were on the side of the Niagara River many months ago advocating once again that the government proceed with a project we'd call Beck 3. First of all, it would be the enlarging of the tunnels to get more capacity for the existing generating station. I think there's now a commitment to look at the development of a third generating station there called Beck 3.

I read in the Niagara Falls Review that my good friend Mr Maves—he'll correct me if I'm wrong—said we couldn't afford it or it wasn't possible to proceed. He'll help me out with that. Mr Gilchrist, the energy czar—what do they call him now?—the commissioner of alternative fuels, was there to say that was not really practical to proceed with.

A few months later, when the government was in the midst of a huge crisis, who do I see standing on the side of the Niagara River but the Conservative members from the local area, along with the Minister of Energy, announcing Beck 3.

I'm always happy when the government accepts one of the suggestions or proposals of the opposition. I was surprised he didn't invite me down to be part of the announcement at that time, but I think he lost my telephone number and was unable to get hold of me. But it was nice to see the government proceeding with what was essentially a policy of the Liberal party, and I want to commend Mr Maves and the government on doing so.

Mr Maves: Let me start off with my friend from St Catharines, Mr Bradley. I hate to burst his bubble, but the idea for a third Beck tunnel and for the Beck 3 plant, which would be a third power plant, is one that's been around for many decades, and it predates even one of my predecessors, Mr Kerrio, who was the energy minister in Niagara Falls. Their plans and the concept was floated as early as the 1960s, and perhaps even 1953 was the first time that Beck 3 as a third plant was actually talked about and thought of. In fact, environmental assessments have been done in the past on the possibility of Beck 3. So that's a project that's been envisaged for many years.

I was proud that once we had implemented and decided to introduce tax cuts which would make the third Beck tunnel and possibly Beck 3 power plant feasible, we decided to move ahead with the Beck 3 tunnel. OPG had said for many years that the third tunnel may not be feasible in the current financial climate. So this government, by acting and bringing in many of the tax cuts that I read about earlier in my speech, actually for the first time made that project economically feasible. That's when we decided to move forward with the tunnel and to do a feasibility study for a Beck 3 plant.

Again, the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan was actually the first person to really talk about the nuts and bolts of this bill tonight. I'll tell her that we were following the lead of Mr Conway, who spoke for an hour without really talking about the bill, and we took the liberty to speak about energy in Ontario in general. Even though I had thrown the challenge out to her that I would like to hear the Liberal policy on energy, she did fail to provide that. I'm hoping some Liberal gets up and clearly enunciates Liberal policy on energy in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell):

I am pleased to take part in this debate on a bill that is to amend the objectives of the Ontario Energy Board, which is to include promoting communications within the gas and electricity industries and educate consumers and protect their interests with respect to prices, reliability and quality of gas service.

I must say that since the very beginning of this hydro fiasco, the Eves government has made a mess of deregulation of the electricity market. First they were going to sell 100% of the hydro system. Then they were going to sell maybe 49%. Then maybe they would wait. Then, after a lot of pressure from Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals, they were forced to admit that they needed to make changes to protect Ontario's consumers, who were unable to cope with the high electricity prices caused by the Eves government.

2100

The reform of this bill should have been addressed way before today. They caused many Ontarians to become nervous with attacks of anxiety about whether they could afford to pay their hydro bills. Nobody—I say nobody—trusts this Ernie Eves government to manage Ontario electricity.

This bill addresses some of the problems in the energy industry such as supply, but until they get that in place,

they will not have provided protection to all Ontario consumers who complain every day about the number of extra charges on their hydro bill.

We had Bill 35, we had Bill 100, we had Bill 210, and now today, we are debating Bill 23. It shows that we're trying to fix the mess that we have created.

In Bill 210, the Minister of Energy, John Baird, and the Premier led Ontarians to believe that all Ontarians would benefit from a guaranteed rate of 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour. This is the cap that was introduced in Bill 210. But soon after the passing of Bill 210, we found out that the farmers were not protected. So on January 21, the minister announced at the farmers' annual meeting that they would benefit from this cap of 4.3.

Then later, on March 18, we started calling the ministry. In the bill we had stated that nursing homes and retirement homes were to qualify for that cap of 4.3. They had forgotten. They forgot to include them. As of today, I was calling the Lise Ménard retirement home in St Isidore, and she told me she hasn't yet received that rebate that she's been qualified for since May 1. They were advised on March 18 this year that they would qualify.

Later, we kept the pressure on this government that it was unfair for small businesses or those people who were using more than 150,000 kilowatts per year. We decided to make an announcement on March 21, the day that I was at PPG, a windshield manufacturer in Hawkesbury that employs over 600 people. They told me on that day, when the cost of their energy was at 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour, it was costing them 99 cents for electricity per windshield. But at that time, the cost of the electricity was at 8.53 cents per kilowatt hour. They told me at that point that the cost per windshield was at \$2.74. Not long after, they received another bill and the cost of hydro, like many other industries in the whole province of Ontario, was 10.55 cents per kilowatt hour.

At 3 o'clock in the afternoon on March 21, the minister made an announcement that, as of May 1, 2002, anyone using less than 250,000 kilowatt hours per year would benefit from this cap of 4.3. Those over the 250,000 kilowatt hours will get a rebate of anything that exceeds 3.8 cents per kilowatt hour. Mind you, everybody in this province, according to Bill 100, was supposed to be getting a rebate of anything paid over 3.8 cents.

Then, when the minister made this announcement on November 11, 2002, everybody thought they were getting a gift. The Premier said that everyone in Ontario would be getting a gift for Christmas of \$75. Mind you, it doesn't pay these days to give a little gift before election time. But the people were pleased to say, "We are getting \$75 as a Christmas gift." Mind you, the government made a saving of \$750 million because they were supposed to give a rebate on anything exceeding the 3.8, and they decided to pass the bill to cap it at 4.3.

But those companies that are paying the 10.55—at one point they were paying 11.22—had to proceed with layoffs. They couldn't afford—like PPG, for example. They

have windshields. Just in hydro, it was costing them \$3.50 per windshield in electricity. PPG is a large company which has four plants in Ontario: one in Hawkesbury, one in Oshawa, one in Owen Sound and one in Mississauga. They also have three other plants in the States. Whenever they get an order from, let's say, Toyota, Mazda or any of those companies, it goes to the head office and then the order is sent to wherever they can do it the cheapest. Talking of \$3.50 per windshield, that is quite in excess of 99 cents per windshield. They decided to lay people off. Other companies on the Quebec border say, "If I was in Quebec, I would be paying 2.4 cents per kilowatt hour. My competition is in Quebec, so I have to close my plant and move to Quebec." It seems to me the government doesn't want to understand this.

I have a Mr Sabourin, who operates a large business—well, I say a large business—of 15 employees in Alexandria. His costs in electricity have gone up by \$60,000 a year at the present time, due to the incompetence of this government toward hydro costs. Mr Sabourin has created a committee in north and south Glengarry to convince people to put pressure on this government. He told me that if anybody wants to call him in Alexandria, his phone number is 613-525-1032. We have already received some calls from Owen Sound, Sault Ste Marie, Windsor, Picton. People want to get in with him and boycott this government. They say, "Are we going to continue sending 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour, put the rest in distress, or are we going to start closing down every business for one day of the year?" It would go all over Ontario. If we proceed this way, it is really going to affect employment. Some employees are going to be affected, but this is going to be caused by this government, which really doesn't care about the small employer.

I've got Dairy Queens that at the present time are using a little over 250,000 kilowatts a year. I was up to a car dealer and he was telling me, "No, I'm paying the 4.3." I said, "Let me see your hydro bill." I looked at it: 10.55. The problem is, for most of those companies, their accountants are paying their bills and they think they're paying 4.3 cents. But given the fact that we are spreading the word like we're doing at the present time, all those small businesses, the job creators, are going get on this wagon and put pressure on this government. It's time to stop.

We spoke about having tax relief for seniors on the property education tax. We are now going to proceed to rent generators at a cost of \$100 million. The tax break those seniors are going to be getting is going to cost this government \$450 million. Let me tell you, if we had proceeded the other way, telling all the seniors in Ontario we would abolish all their transportation charges and all their delivery charges, all the seniors would benefit from this. When we talk about tax relief for seniors, the majority of seniors are not going to get a cent out of it because they already declare that on their tax return, that they are getting this money back.

2110

I was looking on the Internet just today, and I'm very surprised this government has not come up with any deal with any of the suppliers: New York, Michigan, Minnesota, Manitoba, and one, two, three, four, five—they had five contracts with the Quebec government at a low rate. So for July, August and September, no deal has been concluded with any of the suppliers. We are going to export some hydro, but during the month of June we'll be buying 867 megawatt hours from the state of Michigan.

I remember last October. I just happened to be lucky: the government asked me to represent them in Beirut at the Sommet de la Francophonie. During the four days I was there, I spent those days with the Minister of Finance from Manitoba. He told me that they had met with the Premier at the time, Mike Harris, two weeks prior to May 1, and told him not to proceed with the deregulation. But the Premier, Mr Harris—I still say this is the main reason why he decided to step down, because he knew that he had created a real fiasco within the hydro system of Ontario. The Minister of Finance of Manitoba, Greg Selinger, told me that they could have signed an agreement with Manitoba at 3.2 cents per kilowatt hour. We decided not to proceed with it. We decided instead to buy our hydro from Minnesota, who are buying this hydro from Manitoba. So we are paying US dollars at what cost? I did receive the cost of what we're paying for hydro today. From Minnesota we were paying \$270.06 per megawatt hour during the month of May; from Michigan, \$3,033.33 per megawatt hour—that is in American dollars; and from Quebec, \$139. I just can't understand. I can't understand why we are not buying more electricity from Quebec. Just last week there was a communiqué that came out that Hydro-Québec was offering hydro at a low cost to anybody from the States or any Canadian province. When I look at this report today, we have decided not to proceed and probably not approach the province of Quebec to buy hydro or the energy that we need in Ontario.

I have to say, yes, there is a time to create or come up with this Bill 23, but as long as there will be no political interference. We know in the past there has been quite a bit. I have to tell you that Hydro One at the present time has just about full control of any hydro in Ontario except a few municipal hydro companies. I presented a bill in the House here. The bill states very clearly that municipalities should have the power to buy from Hydro One any transmission line within their municipality or within a certain area around their municipality.

Within the village of Embrun, one side of the street where there's a major housing development is run by Embrun Co-Op Hydro, and the other side of the street is run by Hydro One. Hydro One said to extend this street, where there's supposed to be 100 new homes—in a small village, I think it's pretty high. Hydro One said, "No, we cannot supply you with any energy before September." Those houses have been sold. Embrun Co-op Hydro is charging \$50 for connections. Hydro One has decided they have full control whenever you want to hook up to their hydro lines.

Let me tell you, in a lot of projects in eastern Ontario prior to Hydro One taking over, the cost of connecting a house was \$226. I made a statement in this House way back. They decided all of a sudden to increase the price to \$968 without notifying anyone. Those houses were already sold, so the developer was losing in the area of \$740. We asked them to justify the increase. Immediately after I made the statement, I went back to my office and received a phone call from Hydro One. They tell me, "No, we cannot justify it, but I think we have surcharged them by about \$150." This is the system that we have with Hydro One. Hydro One at the present time has full control of some of the areas.

I'm just going to talk about the city of Ottawa at the present time. Before the amalgamation, the city had its own hydro, and now 11 municipalities came up to one municipality. The area of the former Cumberland township consists of 37,000 rural residents. They are paying an average of \$250 more per year per household. When I look at the graphic they sent me, just to show you that Hydro One are trying to keep control and want to take over everything—we know they paid big money to acquire municipal electric commissions.

If I look at the normal residential density in Ottawa, Hydro One's current rate is \$23.70 for the delivery charge. Ottawa Hydro is \$6.69. That is the fixed charge, sorry. The Hydro One delivery rate is 0.0133 and Ottawa Hydro's is 0.0122.

When I look at the rural area, urban density, the fixed rate is \$12.52 for a fixed charge and \$6.69 for Hydro One. So there's a big difference in cost, but they don't want to let Ottawa Hydro take over.

At the present time, it has been a fiasco.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Martin: I appreciate the opportunity to speak after the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell. He, I think, makes some very cogent arguments re why this bill isn't going to do the trick that the government suggested it needed to do. In fact, we've been clear and on the record in the NDP caucus in saying that this bill is nothing but another example of the government's continuing use of shell games to try to cover up mistakes that they made, and to divert responsibility and blame someplace other than at their front door.

We know from their handling of the hydro portfolio that when things got hot—no pun intended—they initially dumped responsibility and blame on Ontario Hydro and Eleanor Clitheroe. Then they turned to the Ontario Energy Board, to blame it for not doing that which it had no mandate to do, and then to ultimately blame Floyd Laughren. Then they brought in this bill, which is purported to give the Ontario Energy Board the kinds of controls necessary to make sure that as they deregulate and privatize the hydroelectricity system in this province, the consumer out there will have some confidence that somebody is minding the shop; that there are provisions and facilities available for people to make complaints and that they will in fact be dealt with.

Our review of this piece of public business is that in fact this newly revised OEB will not have that ability, if

for no other reason than they haven't been allocated the resources to do the job.

2120

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I am pleased to add some comments this evening on Bill 23, the Ontario Energy Board act, in response to the member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell. He was talking in his speech about property tax relief for seniors. Before the Legislature at the current time we do have Bill 43, An Act to provide Ontario home property tax relief for seniors, which was debated last week.

We, on this side of the House, happen to think that's a good thing. In fact, it's part of our election platform for the election that will be upcoming in the not-too-distant future, I'm sure. We happen to believe that seniors who are on a fixed income need assistance in paying for things like property tax but also their hydro bills. This act to provide Ontario home property tax relief for seniors will be a significant benefit to seniors in this province. It's going to be an annual savings of about \$475 for the average bill; \$450 million a year back in the hands of Ontario seniors.

I should point out that the Liberals have made it very clear that they're against this policy. In fact, if they are the government they are going to do away with this planned tax relief for seniors. I think we need to make that very clear. They've made it very clear if they by chance become the government, they're going to do away with this property tax relief for seniors.

We, on this side of the House, happen to think it's a good thing for seniors. They deserve to receive this tax credit, and we're looking forward to passing that bill in the next few weeks to help keep our seniors financially secure into the future.

Mrs Dombrowsky: With the regard to the bill that's being debated this evening, Bill 23, which the government would suggest is a bill intended to protect consumers with respect to their hydro rates, the member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell referenced situations in his riding with regard to hydro customers who would use over 250,000 kilowatt hours of power per month.

The price control measures that most families enjoy, the price cap, is not extended to those people who would use above 250,000 kilowatt hours of power per month. In my riding, that is having a very negative impact for a number of business owners. One example is an individual who approached me and is the owner of a kiln; he dries lumber in his kiln. Of course you can appreciate that that kind of operation would use a significant amount of hydro, and he does not enjoy the cap that is in place.

I say to the members of the government who would suggest to the people of Ontario that this bill is going to ensure consumer protection—I think it's very important for the people of Ontario to be aware that not all consumers are going to be protected. There are people, very probably in your communities, not so very far from you—we're not talking about major corporations; we're talking about M&M meat shops, for example, or any kind of business where there would be compressors or

machinery or equipment that would be required to run 24 hours a day. I say to the members of the government, what protection is there in this legislation for them? I was very happy that the member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell made the point as well. I think it's very important that people in Ontario know that this bill will not do all they say it does.

Mr Maves: I just want to make a few comments here. I commended the member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan for actually speaking to the bill tonight. I just wanted to correct her on at least two of her mistakes, anyway.

She said that this bill will make the OEB become self-financing. She should know that it is already, always has been. This bill gives them a little bit more leeway for not having to get everything they want to do through cabinet.

She also said that municipal utilities will have to pick up the cost of the difference between the 4.3-cent cap and the market price, and that's incorrect.

My friend from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell wanted to know why we weren't importing power from Quebec. Part of the reason why we're not importing more power from Quebec is that we don't have the interconnectedness that we need to get more power from Quebec. We're currently working on an agreement with Quebec to actually put the connections in place, the transmission that we need to make importation of more power from Quebec a possibility. I think we're doing that with Manitoba also.

I'd like to finish off, though—my colleague from Parry Sound-Muskoka mentioned that the Liberals were opposed to the seniors' tax credit, much to our chagrin. Some of my colleagues on this side of the table said, "Did they really vote against that? How could they be against tax relief for seniors?" I'm going to tell you how they're against tax relief for seniors. I'm going to read a quote from my friend Gerretsen from Kingston and the Islands, from Hansard. This is why, if you listen closely, colleagues, the Liberals are opposed to that tax cut. Gerretsen says of the seniors' property tax credit, "It goes directly contrary to the whole notion of government and what government should be all about, which is to collect taxes from people." So clearly the Liberals think it is their job, if they become the government, to simply collect taxes from people. That's why they voted against the seniors' tax credit.

Mrs McLeod: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would just ask that the member for Niagara Falls might wish to correct the record—I won't ask him to do that—when he reviews Hansard, just on the accuracy of what I had to say.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Lalonde: I'd like to say thanks to those who recognize the points that I brought to their attention.

The member for Niagara Falls, when he referred to the seniors' education tax—let me tell you that at the present time, this government is going to invest \$450 million. He says, "We don't like to collect taxes from seniors, but right now we're charging them transportation and

delivery charges," of which everyone in this province could receive their equal share.

Another point also: we are going to proceed to spend \$100 million just to rent generators. Have we contacted the federal government? At the present time, national defence has 300 generators, of which the majority are there in case of emergency. Have we contacted the federal public works to see if they could help us, without going through that \$100 million expense? We know that they have them, because I have contacted them, but no one from this government has contacted them. You want

to make yourself look good because you say, "We are going to spend \$100 million just to make sure that we don't get stuck with brownouts," but we could save this foolish expense at the present time. That money could have been spent either on schools or health services, which we are going to spend just to get political benefit from this announcement.

The Acting Speaker: It being 9:30 of the clock, this House stands ad-journed until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 2130.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)
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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Règlements et projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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McMeekin, Bill Murdoch, Wayne Wettlaufer
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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Fourth Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Quatrième session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 18 June 2003

Mercredi 18 juin 2003

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 18 June 2003

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 18 juin 2003

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): Last Friday at the Lester B. Pearson Centre in Elliot Lake, Mayor George Farkouh, my federal colleague Brent St Denis, MP, and I met with a large group of interested persons who have been working very hard in the community to establish a community health centre. Bob Campbell, co-chair Louis Ratthe and public relations chair Bob Whitehead introduced a number of speakers who outlined the advantages of community health centres. The group has put together a comprehensive primary care proposal that will serve not only francophones but the broader community. The proposal would see physicians, nurse practitioners, nurses and other health professionals providing patients with the appropriate professional for the appropriate need.

Over two years ago I directly presented this proposal to Minister Clement. Since that time, we've been waiting for answer.

On Friday, young people from the Clair Dimock and All Star children's daycare centres presented me with over 2,000 cards asking the government to approve a community health centre for Elliot Lake. Today, on behalf of all of those in Elliot Lake who support this proposal, I present these cards to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

UNITED EMPIRE LOYALISTS' DAY

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): It was six years ago that this government passed a bill proclaiming United Empire Loyalists' Day. Tomorrow, June 19—United Empire Loyalists' Day—we will once again commemorate the sacrifice and contributions made by thousands of United Empire Loyalists who fled persecution south of the border to make their mark in Canada. It's my honour tomorrow to host a flag-raising ceremony outside this Legislature to mark the occasion.

Last year in Norfolk county we welcomed close to 100 proud descendants of United Empire Loyalists for their national conference. Meeting with the many proud descendants of the Loyalist legacy gave me a chance to

reflect on my own Loyalist heritage. Officially, I am UE through the Bowlby family on my mom's side. I will mention as well that my middle name is Butler.

We are all benefactors of the Loyalist vision that founded our province and our Dominion. Evidence of their hard work and significant contributions to the Ontario we know today can be found throughout this great province. I urge all MPPs to pay tribute to our Loyalist heritage tomorrow morning. We're getting together at 10:45.

I wish to end by quoting the very motto of this province, "Loyal in the beginning, loyal remaining," a constant reminder of our Loyalist values. God save the Queen.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): It is more than two years since the Minister of Health established nine regional task forces to determine the needs in the area of community mental health. The task forces were made up of mental health advocates who have worked hard, in good faith, to make recommendations to this government. They believe, or at least they believed, that this government actually intended to act on their recommendations.

These reports have been sitting on the minister's desk since December. The people who know what these reports contain are bound by a commitment to confidentiality that they were made to sign when they became members of the task forces, but they are getting increasingly frustrated by the complete lack of response from the minister.

In the absence of public access to the reports, we can be sure of two things: one is that the reports document the desperate need for community mental health services; the other is the fact that the release of the reports will embarrass a government that has refused even to acknowledge the real needs of community mental health.

No wonder they want to bury the truth of what's in these reports: an indictment of this government's failure to keep its promises on mental health.

This is the government that repeatedly promised that their law, Brian's Law, would be backed up with community support and treatment for those coping with mental illness. But community mental health agencies have had no increase in their base budgets for a decade; waiting lists of people needing help urgently are getting unmanageable; agencies find it impossible to deal even

with crisis situations. Waiting lists can be as long as five years. One agency, for example, that was designed to serve 12 clients now serves, as best they can, 250 people.

While community agencies struggle to meet the most critical needs, we know that people are being discharged from hospitals with no support, and that more and more people are being put in jail for their own protection because there is no place where they can get support and care.

It is past time for this government to release the reports that document these needs. It is time for this government to keep its promises to those with mental illness.

KINDERGARTEN

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Currently, most children attend kindergarten for half-days every day or for full days every second day and it varies across the province. But an Alberta study found that full-time JK and full-time SK had a dramatic impact on children's mastery of key learning skills, particularly reading, and that it may be an important influence on their ability to succeed in the first years of school.

The study raises the question of whether it may be a mistake for schools to hold back on kindergarten time, as they may end up eventually paying the costs for students lagging behind.

Dr Jose da Costa, an education professor at the University of Alberta and one of the authors of the study, said the evidence should compel educational authorities to implement full-day, five-day-a-week kindergarten immediately, particularly for schools in low-income neighbourhoods. Yet Mr Christie, the marionette controlled by the Conservative government, through an act of malfeasance got rid of nine full-time senior kindergartens in the inner-city school area of Toronto.

New Democrats have a proposal. We've been talking about this for quite some time. We argue that full-time junior kindergarten and full-time senior kindergarten would restore equity to so many children who desperately need it in those early years. That study confirms it. Many have spoken about it; New Democrats would do it, and it's in our platform.

1340

GOVERNMENT'S AGENDA

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I'm pleased to support our government's proposed initiative to permit Ontario homeowners to deduct up to \$5,000 of their yearly income interest costs from their Ontario taxable income, phased in over five years. This deduction will make home ownership more affordable, encourage new purchasers and create more jobs.

I am pleased to support our government's proposed initiative to prohibit strikes, lockouts and work-to-rule actions during the school year in the public and Catholic

school systems in Ontario. The education of our children is too important to be disrupted by labour strife.

I am pleased to support our government's proposed initiative to create 8,000 new positions for nurses over the next three years and the hiring of 1,000 new nurse practitioners over the next five years. The nursing profession is one of the pillars of our health care system.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton):

Yesterday, I reintroduced for the third time my private member's bill, An Act to require open meetings for provincial and municipal boards, commissions and other public bodies. This bill, along with Dalton McGuinty's commitment to good government, is the most marked difference between the provincial Liberal standards of more open and honest government versus the lower standards of Premier Ernie Eves.

In the 2002 report of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario, she calls for the need for an open meeting act with penalties and oversight—a much-needed law, such as the one that I tabled yesterday. This bill raises the bar of accountability and will ensure transparency in decisions made by public bodies who spend taxpayers' dollars. It adds a penalty to those who conduct meetings inappropriately behind closed doors. The Conservatives voted against this bill in 2002 after second reading.

Ann Cavoukian, Ontario's Information and Privacy Commissioner, states that people expect and demand greater levels of transparency in decision-making processes of government. Unfortunately, it seems that the provincial Conservatives have lost their way and have actually conducted themselves with less transparency, less accountability, and they accept lower standards of conduct across the board. This is yet another reason that it's time for a change in the province of Ontario.

NORTH BAY RELAY FOR LIFE

Mr AL McDonald (Nipissing): Last Friday, I had the opportunity to attend the Relay for Life in the city of North Bay. It was held up at the air force base. I had the opportunity of speaking from the stage, and when I looked out over the crowd, it was something to see, the crowd that was there. There were 138 teams participating in the Relay for Life, and they raised \$280,000 for cancer research. I'm very proud of this group because they raised more per capita than any city in the province.

The first lap was a lap of survivors. They read their names out. It was one way for us to stand there and applaud them for their courage and to support them in their battle. It was an incredible event. We have to thank the volunteers and the participants who made it what it was.

The Relay for Life is our way of remembering those we've lost to this terrible disease, to support and encourage those who are in the battle of this important

disease, and to celebrate those who have survived. I have to tell you that I was very proud just to be at the event. There was a young woman who had invited me to walk with her on Friday night. Unfortunately, her disease came back, and she wasn't able to be there with us that night, but I just want to extend our thoughts to her.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): The people of Ontario are taking a pounding from skyrocketing insurance rates. Sadly, the Conservatives just sit there and make excuses for doing nothing while honest, hard-working people live in fear of their next insurance rate hike.

But the real tragedy is the NDP. Every time I look to their benches, it's like a time warp. It's almost as though I were peering back to 1989 and listening to Peter Kormos call over and over again for public auto insurance.

Now, the NDP promised public auto insurance. They pledged it with their heart and said it was the cure to all the woes of the world. Right there in their 1990 platform it said, "New Democrats for many years have proposed that Ontario have a driver-owned system of car insurance." They promised "a driver-owned car insurance plan that's fair, affordable and accessible."

Did they do that? No, they broke their promise. Where was Howard Hampton when the NDP broke that promise? Sitting at the cabinet table. Where was Shelley Martel when they broke that promise? Sitting at the cabinet table. Where was Marilyn Churley when they broke that promise? Sitting at the cabinet table. Where was Rosario Marchese when they broke that promise? Sitting around the cabinet table.

Where is their credibility on auto insurance? Nowhere.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): On June 12, I raised concerns in this House with the Minister of Transportation about the government's plan to proceed with the environmental assessment for the mid-peninsula highway.

As you know, on Monday, June 16, the city of Burlington and Halton region filed a notice of application for a judicial review with the Ontario Superior Court. I have read this 30-page application. My community and I continue to hold to the belief that the province hasn't sufficiently examined the environmental impacts of building a new highway along the escarpment. We aren't sure the proposed route will solve all our transit issues, and we argue that the province is breaking environmental law by moving forward with this EA.

Yesterday in Divisional Court, a ruling found that sections of the Environmental Assessment Act amendments in 1996 limited the scope of an EA and they were struck down. In short, the government's EA process literally only asks the question, "Where will the pavement be put?" However, with yesterday's Divisional

Court ruling, the Ministry of the Environment has no jurisdiction to approve a scoped or pared-down environmental assessment whose terms of reference eliminate the question of a need for a proposed highway or consideration for alternatives to building this highway.

I have consistently supported the concerns of my community and the concerns of COPE and CONE. I again ask the minister to reconsider proceeding with this mid-peninsula EA and to get back to the table with the city of Burlington and the region of Halton.

Hon Frank Klees (Minister of Transportation): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: With all respect, I would ask the member from Burlington to read the needs assessment. He may get some information he didn't have before.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): That's not a point of order. I usually look to the other side to do that.

Interjections.

The Speaker: I note that everybody is good-natured, which is very helpful on the issue.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated June 18, 2003, of the standing committee on government agencies.

You all stopped and thought I was going to read something very important here, didn't you?

Pursuant to standing order 106(e)9, the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

I'm sure you didn't stop because I was saying so. It's coming toward the end of the session, and I won't be around here much longer. So it's what matters.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on regulations and private bills and move its adoption:

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill Pr18, An Act respecting the County of Haliburton.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (MOTORCYCLE HELMETS), 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (CASQUES DE MOTOCYCLISTES)

Mr Bartolucci moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 109, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to motorcycle helmets / Projet de loi 109, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui concerne les casques de motocyclistes.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will please say "aye."

All opposed will please say "nay."

The ayes have it. Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): The police of the province of Ontario have asked me to introduce this bill. It amends the Highway Traffic Act to require motorcyclists to surrender their helmets for police inspection on request. This will save police forces across Ontario numerous hours that they have to wait in the courts processing these types of violations.

1350

JUNE 30, 2003 STATUTORY HOLIDAY ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 DÉSIGNANT JOUR FÉRIÉ LE 30 JUIN 2003

Mr Kormos moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 110, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 / Projet de loi 110, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Ontario's workers are working harder, working longer, 12-hour workdays, 60-hour workweeks, in the Mike Harris-Ernie Eves Conservative Ontario. This amends the Employment Standards Act to provide that June 30, 2003, is a public holiday. That will permit hardworking people to have a long weekend, come the July 1st weekend, as compared to the regular two-day weekend that they would otherwise have. It's part of the NDP commitment to create two new statutory holidays for workers here in Ontario so that we have 10 stat holidays, in comparison to the United Kingdom and France, both of which have 13.

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LA JOURNÉE INTERNATIONALE POUR L'ÉLIMINATION DE LA DISCRIMINATION RACIALE

Mr Duncan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 111, An Act to proclaim March 21 as International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination / Projet de loi 111, Loi proclamant le 21 mars Journée internationale pour l'élimination de la discrimination raciale.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for short statement?

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): The United Nations commemorates International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on March 21 of each year. That day commences the week of solidarity with people struggling against racism and racial discrimination. The people of Ontario abhor racial discrimination in all its forms, and therefore we believe this bill should be passed. It also reflects how much we abhor the fact that immigration would be part of the Tory's crime and punishment section of their campaign document.

SIR ADAM BECK MEMORIAL ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 À LA MÉMOIRE DE SIR ADAM BECK

Mr Hampton moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 112, An Act, in memory of Sir Adam Beck, to prevent the privatization of Hydro One Inc. / Projet de loi 112, Loi à la mémoire de Sir Adam Beck visant à empêcher la privatisation de Hydro One Inc.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for short statement?

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): This is an act in memory of Sir Adam Beck, the creator of Ontario's publicly owned hydroelectric system. It is to prevent the privatization of Hydro One Inc, which the government says it doesn't want to privatize.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION AND HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT AMENDMENT ACT (NOISE REMEDIATION), 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'AMÉNAGEMENT DES VOIES PUBLIQUES ET DES TRANSPORTS EN COMMUN (RÉDUCTION DU BRUIT)

Mr Caplan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 113, An Act to amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act with respect to noise remediation / Projet de loi 113, Loi modifiant la Loi sur

l'aménagement des voies publiques et des transports en commun afin de réduire le bruit.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): This bill amends the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act to require the Minister of Transportation to assess noise levels on highways after their construction, extension or alteration. When the noise level exceeds acceptable levels by five decibels or more, the minister is obliged to take all necessary steps to reduce the noise to an acceptable level within three years. This bill also requires the minister to establish and publish standards for acceptable noise levels for the operation of highways.

This bill is done to complement the extensive work and lobbying that residents of the community of Don Valley East have been doing to remediate the noise increases that have resulted from road repairs and other work on Highways 401 and 404 and the Don Valley Parkway that intersect in the heart of Don Valley East. They've been frustrated by the Ministry of Transportation, who have thrown up their hands when presented with their concerns, saying they have no mandate to solve these problems. With this bill, residents of Don Valley East can rest easier.

FIRE PROTECTION AND PREVENTION AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PRÉVENTION ET LA PROTECTION CONTRE L'INCENDIE

Mr Levac moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 114, An Act to amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997 / Projet de loi 114, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la prévention et la protection contre l'incendie.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): Given the results of several serious inquiries across the province, the bill requires that any proposals to reduce or restructure fire protection services in communities be approved by the fire marshal before being implemented. The fire marshal would then be required to do an annual report to the minister on any of these proposals that were reviewed.

AUTO-DIALER CRIME ALERT ACT, 2003 LOI DE 2003 SUR LES APPELS AUTOMATIQUES D'AVERTISSEMENT D'ACTES CRIMINELS

Mr Colle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 115, An Act to enhance community safety and crime prevention by supporting existing auto-dialer crime

alert programs and encouraging the establishment of new auto-dialer crime alert programs in communities across Ontario / Projet de loi 115, Loi visant à améliorer la sécurité publique et la prévention du crime en aidant les programmes d'appels automatiques d'avertissement d'actes criminels et en encourageant la mise en place de nouveaux programmes semblables au sein des collectivités en Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): The bill proposes measures to enhance and support auto-dialer crime alert programs operating in Ontario communities and to encourage the establishment and operation of such programs throughout the province. Auto-dialer crime alert programs permit the transmission of voice and e-mail messages related to criminal activity and public safety to members of the public who wish to receive them.

1400

REGISTERED PLAN (RETIREMENT INCOME) EXEMPTION ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 PORTANT INSAISSABILITÉ DES RÉGIMES ENREGISTRÉS (REVENU DE RETRAITE)

Mr Bartolucci moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 116, An Act exempting registered retirement plans from certain enforcement processes / Projet de loi 116, Loi portant exemption des régimes de retraite enregistrés de certaines mesures d'exécution forcée.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This bill provides that registered retirement savings plans, registered retirement income funds and deferred profit-sharing plans of plan holders are exempt from certain enforcement processes brought to them by their creditors.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I ask for unanimous consent for second and third reading of Bill 100, An Act respecting the Kawartha Highlands Signature Site Park.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

PRIVATE INVESTIGATORS AND SECURITY GUARDS AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES ENQUÊTEURS PRIVÉS ET LES GARDIENS

Mr Levac moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 117, An Act to amend the Private Investigators and Security Guards Act to require a minimum level of training for licensees and to require that uniforms and vehicles of security guards be readily distinguishable from those of the police / *Projet de loi 117, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les enquêteurs privés et les gardiens en vue d'exiger un niveau de formation minimum pour les titulaires de licences et d'exiger que les uniformes et les véhicules des gardiens se distinguent facilement de ceux de la police.*

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): This is a bill that is a duplicate of a previous bill that died on the order paper, and it is requested by all police services in the province of Ontario. The bill requires that applicants for licensing as private investigators and security guards have a minimum level of training before being licensed. The bill also requires that uniforms worn by security guards and the vehicles they use as security guards in the course of their employment can readily be distinguishable from those that we have in our police services today.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The Leader of the Opposition, Mr Hampton, asked for unanimous consent on Bill 100. I'm wondering if it was the member from Eglinton-Lawrence who declined to—

The Speaker: That is not a point of order. Just to correct the record, the member is not the leader of the official opposition.

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT (APPROPRIATE USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN SCHOOLS), 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ÉDUCATION (UTILISATION APPROPRIÉE DE LA TECHNOLOGIE DANS LES ÉCOLES)

Mr Caplan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 118, An Act to amend the Education Act to provide for the appropriate use of communications technology in schools by requiring boards to establish policies and guidelines governing the use of wireless communications devices by pupils on school premises / *Projet de loi 118, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation afin de prévoir l'utilisation appropriée de la technologie de communication dans les écoles en exigeant que les conseils établissent des politiques et des lignes directrices régissant l'utilisation par les élèves de dispositifs de communication sans fil dans les lieux scolaires.*

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): This bill was created in response to the many parents and educators who have real concerns about the use of wireless

technology in our schools. Whether it's ringing cellphones, beeping pagers or instant messaging between students, I believe we need to ensure that all boards have rules governing their use.

This bill, if passed, will amend the Education Act to require boards of education to establish policies and guidelines governing the use of cellphones, pagers and similar devices by pupils on school premises and will ensure that these policies and guidelines provide disciplinary consequences for non-compliance.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Mr Speaker, for my friend from Stoney Creek: I would like to ask unanimous consent of the House to hear Mr Jackson's statement again when he comes back, because I couldn't hear it for all the government ministers shouting at him while he was trying to speak. Do we have unanimous consent for that?

The Speaker: I'm afraid I heard some noes.

VISITORS

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): Speaker, I'd like you and the members to join with me in welcoming, in the west members' gallery, a long-time friend and long-serving member of the Essex South and Essex Liberal association, my friend Jake deJong.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I thank the members.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Je souhaite la bienvenue à Guilaine et Michel Potvin, visiteurs dans la galerie ouest ici. Michelle and Guilane Potrin are interested in French education, and in support of a French school. They were fortunate, or unfortunate, enough to win a lunch with me here at the Legislature today. They're here, and I'm sure everyone joins me in welcoming them to the Legislature today.

The Speaker: We welcome our guests.

Just before we continue, in case we've missed anybody, I'll say it again: introduction of bills? I didn't think there was anybody left.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice, debate or amendment respecting today's sitting.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Baird: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 9 or any other order of the House, the House may continue to meet beyond 6 pm today in order that order numbers G43 and G53 may be called, and that im-

mediately following consideration of those orders, the Speaker shall adjourn the House until Thursday, June 19, at 10 am.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

ORAL QUESTIONS

FISCAL AND ECONOMIC POLICY

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is actually for the Minister of Finance, but I don't think she's here as yet. I'd been led to believe she would be here. Since the finance minister is not here, I'll go to the Premier.

Actually, the minister is just arriving, and I'll begin my question now.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): If we could put the clock back and start again. The member for Scarborough-Agincourt.

Mr Phillips: Minister, from the statements we've seen from you in the media it seems that you believe Ontario's fiscal situation is getting worse. The budget assumed a 3% real growth, and I gather the indications now are that it may be lower or substantially lower. In the budget, there were some major risks—I think \$2.2 billion of asset sales that you planned—I believe about \$770 million from the federal government that assumed a \$6-billion surplus of the federal government. If growth indeed is 1% lower, I gather that we lose revenue of \$600 million.

Recognizing that Ontario appears to be facing a significant fiscal situation—the rating agencies indicate as much as a \$2-billion deficit—will you provide Ontario with an updated economic and fiscal outlook indicating how you plan to deal with these growing problems?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): We've balanced the budget in this province four times, we are going to do it for a fifth and, as the honourable member knows, we report regularly on the finances of Ontario. We will continue to do that as we have in the past.

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Mr Phillips: You've indicated, Minister, that you may have to take some fairly dramatic action. There are two areas that you can take the action in. One is to cut planned spending and the second is to delay the tax cuts.

It was exactly a year ago that you presented your budget of 2002 here in the Legislature. There you said, "Because of the temporary fiscal situation, the Ontario government has made the decision to reschedule certain major planned tax cuts." That was a year ago.

We face again, I gather, based on your comments, another significant fiscal situation. The question is this: recognizing that the problems are similar to last year, is the delay of promised tax cuts one of the options you're considering?

Hon Mrs Ecker: The situation is not similar to what it was last year. This year we are facing two significant

problems. One of them is the impact of SARS on this province and the second is Ottawa's totally inadequate response to dealing with that. I think the honourable member could have been helpful if, instead of standing here in your place and asking this question, you would join with us in the work that we're trying to do on behalf of Ontario residents to get our fair share of support for SARS. Our health community needs that, our business community here needs that and Ottawa needs to be at the table to help us in that regard.

Mr Phillips: I gather, Minister, you're saying the situation may be in fact worse than last year. I simply want to say to you that last year when you faced a "fiscal situation," as you called it—and I gather you're saying the situation may be worse—you made the decision to cancel scheduled tax cuts. You have indicated that you have to make some big decisions on behalf of the Eves government. You are, I gather, planning to make some substantial cuts in services. The people of Ontario at least want to be assured that as part of your plan to balance the budget you will do the same thing that you did last year: that you will make certain that one of the decisions that you will look at, and frankly we recommend, in dealing with this situation is to once again delay scheduled tax cuts. Is that one of the options—delaying scheduled tax cuts—you are looking at, or have you ruled that out?

Hon Mrs Ecker: First of all, last year we did not cancel tax cuts; as a matter of fact, our budget had additional tax cuts in it. This spring's budget had tax cuts in it.

I know the Liberal Party across the way has voted against every tax cut, every piece of tax relief we have given hard-working citizens in Ontario, including what is on the table right now: additional tax relief for seniors. They have voted against it every single time.

On this side of the House, we believe that tax relief is part of the economic plan that has allowed this province to grow as strongly as it has, that has allowed this province to have over a million new jobs, that allowed this province to rebound from what happened to us with the events of 9/11, and it is the same economic plan that will allow this province to continue to grow—not their plan, our plan.

PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKS

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, all of us in this Legislature have applauded the heroic efforts of our health care workers as they care for patients afflicted with SARS, often at risk to their own health and even their own lives. Our health care workers in turn have expected of both their government and their employers a commitment to provide the maximum possible protection for them.

As you know, one of the keys to proper protection for nurses and health care workers working in hospitals is to have properly fitted masks. It was in relationship to that,

at the request of nurses, that the Ministry of Labour undertook a little over a week ago to issue orders regarding protective equipment in hospitals and to undertake to proactively investigate high-risk hospitals and, indeed, committed to continue to visit all Toronto-area hospitals to ensure that our health care workers would be properly protected.

Minister, today the nurses' association of Ontario wrote a letter to your Premier indicating that the Ministry of Labour has ordered a halt to all proactive inspections for Toronto-area hospitals. The nurses want to know why the proactive inspections to protect our nurses have been halted.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I think the best way to answer that is to refer it to the Minister of Labour.

Hon Brad Clark (Minister of Labour): I thank the honourable member for the question. It gives me an opportunity to clarify exactly what's been happening. There were two hospitals, actually, where the Ministry of Labour was called in specifically to deal with the fitting of masks. And with the greatest respect, they're respirators. They're N95 respirators; they're not masks.

The process is very simple. We provided to the Ministry of Health how the fitting should occur and the employers are responsible for doing it with their nurses. That's the way the law works. The Ministry of Labour does not go out and do fit-testing for all of the employers in the province of Ontario.

There have been complaints. The member is correct in that. As a matter of fact, from March 27 to June 16, there have been 21 SARS-related work refusals in the Ontario public service and there have been 31 SARS-related work refusals in various sectors, including the health care sector. Of these, 10 were related to the issue of wearing masks and gloves and one of these 10 was from nurses and physicians. We are enforcing the laws.

Mrs McLeod: The nurses' association considers it "completely unacceptable" that proactive inspections are only going to proceed now for categories 3 and 2 hospitals, where SARS has actually occurred.

My supplementary question should be redirected to the Minister of Health, because the nurses were even more disappointed and more concerned when they learned that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care had replaced its original May 31 directives with revised directives that were issued just this past Monday, June 16, which in their view reduced the protection for the majority of health care workers. They believe it is premature to reduce the protection of these workers, and we would have to agree, given the fact that as of Monday when the protection was reduced, there were still 44 probable cases of SARS in the GTA.

I have to return with my supplemental question to the Minister of Health. Why was your ministry in fact working with the chief executive officer of Sunnybrook and Women's College Hospital, without consultation with the Ontario Nurses' Association, to revise the directives that had originally been issued on May 31, which

did provide an assurance that the maximum degree of protection would be provided to our health care workers?

Hon Mr Clark: I'll refer the matter back to the Minister of Health.

Hon Mr Clement: I can certainly confirm that there have been a series of new directives out to all health care venues, including acute care hospitals, but also to long-term-care facilities and physicians' offices. They reflect the latest that is known on a scientific basis as to the best infection control techniques that can be employed to protect health care workers, patients and our community. I signed off on those as the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and Drs Young and D'Cunha issued those directives on the basis of our science committee and their recommendations and on the basis of extensive consultation with the hospital and other health care sectors.

If the honourable member has an individual or an organization that wishes to comment on the directives, we do invite that kind of commentary, because there is always an opportunity to improve where necessary, and we're certainly willing and able to do that.

Mrs McLeod: Minister, this is not "an organization"; this is the body representing the Ontario nurses who are out in our hospitals day in and day out, concerned, coming out of frightened families who know that they're putting their safety, their health and even their lives at risk to do their jobs and who ask at least that their government and their employers provide them with minimum protection. That is a highly abstract and theoretical answer to an organization that represents nurses.

Minister, let me read to you what the nurses have asked the Premier: "I ask you," Premier, "to direct the MOH/LTC to reinstate precautions in the directives that fully protect all health care workers in patient-care areas and ask you to direct the MOL to reinstitute proactive health and safety investigations, with sufficient resources to complete them forthwith."

They go on to say, "Failure to meet these obligations, in our opinion, would also constitute statutory negligence on the part of this government. We urge you in the strongest terms not to stand back and knowingly aid and abet those employers who continue to put our members' lives at risk."

Minister, how do you answer the nurses who say that your government is knowingly aiding and abetting employers to put health care workers' lives at risk?

Hon Mr Clement: To the Minister of Labour.

1420

Hon Mr Clark: I take great exception to what the member opposite has just said. The reality is the system is working. With the greatest of respect, the process has been this way for many years. You know that. The employer is responsible for fit testing and safety precautions. There are joint health and safety committees in the hospitals. If the nurses have concerns about these issues, they take it to the committee.

Twenty-one SARS-related refusals, 31 in the health care—10 in the health care sector, one from the nurses and physicians. The Ministry of Labour has investigated

the matters. They have issued orders where orders are necessary in two hospitals. The orders have been complied with.

The Ministry of Health has made very clear what the guidelines are and my ministry is responsible for enforcing them. If the nurses have concerns, they do exactly what they're doing now. They take it to the joint health and safety committee, and if they still have concerns, they bring it to the Ministry of Health, and it inspects, investigates and does orders.

HYDRO ONE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Today I tabled the Sir Adam Beck Memorial Act, which would make it illegal for any government to sell Hydro One. One year ago your government passed legislation giving yourself the power to sell Hydro One. Four months ago you said, in anticipation of an election, that you were not going to sell Hydro One. One month ago we saw your budget, which shows you intend to sell over \$2 billion in public assets, but you refuse to tell the people of Ontario what assets you'll sell. So that the people of Ontario can be absolutely sure, will you pass the Sir Adam Beck Memorial Act so that Hydro One will remain in public hands?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): As the leader of the third party knows, we have stated that we would not part with control of Hydro One. Even if Hydro One were to have been sold a year ago, it wouldn't have generated anywhere near the \$2 billion or \$2.2 billion that he claims it would. Actually, the net book value the province would have been able to book as a net benefit would have been about \$200 million to \$400 million at most.

Mr Hampton: Premier, it's a simple request. Will you pass legislation that ensures Hydro One remains in public hands? You should be able to answer that yes or no. What is so confusing are the answers you give. One day you say, "We're not interested in privatizing Hydro One." The next day you say, "We wouldn't be interested in giving up control of Hydro One." Then we see your budget, which is deteriorating every day, which is now a \$4-billion problem rather than a \$2-billion problem. I think the people of Ontario deserve a straight answer. Will you pass this bill that will ensure that Hydro One, that not any part of it can be sold off, yes or no?

Hon Mr Eves: We don't have to pass the bill. We've made the commitment to the public that we are not parting with control of Hydro One, and we're not. Now, any part of it is a different question. The answer to that question, any part of it, is no. The reality is we are not parting with control of Hydro One.

Mr Hampton: Premier, you're starting to sound like another political leader in this House, who when first asked said, "Yes, I would sell Hydro One," and then three or four months later—

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Who's that?

Mr Hampton: It's the Liberal leader who said this. Then three or four months later he said he wouldn't sell Hydro One.

Premier, the reality is this: people know there is an election coming and what people are concerned about is, if you should be re-elected, or frankly if the Liberals were elected, what would be sold off right away? Hydro One. That's exactly what would be on the chopping block. Yet you say Hydro One is not for sale. So if it's not for sale, will you pass this legislation, which clearly says it's not for sale now, it's not for sale after the election, it's not for sale, period? Will you pass it, yes or no?

Hon Mr Eves: We've said no. We've made the commitment that we are not parting with control of Hydro One. No more need be said.

WEST NILE VIRUS

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Premier, I am sending you over a letter, and I am sending over a letter for the Minister of Health. You would have received this letter earlier today from the Toronto medical officer of health, Dr Sheela Basrur, and the chair of the board of health for Toronto, Councillor Joe Mihevc. The letter states that without 100% funding for West Nile prevention, Toronto cannot put in place the required surveillance and prevention program to fight West Nile.

Premier, next week, you will head off on your summer holidays, and the reality will be that municipalities and health units will be left holding the bag. Will you do the right thing? Will do what Dr Basrur and the public health unit of Toronto want you to do? Will you assure them of 100% funding so that those municipalities and public health units that have to fight West Nile virus this summer will be able to do that? Will you do it now?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I refer the question to the Minister of Health.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I want to assure the honourable member, the leader of the third party, that in fact the province will be paying, as a result of the Premier's announcement earlier last month, 100% of the costs of larvicide, 100% of a province-wide, comprehensive public education campaign, all lab testing for human cases, dead bird surveillance and transport to testing, all adult mosquito surveillance, a new Web-based integrated information system, an early warning surveillance system and a provincial prevention control coordinator.

As a result of the Premier's leadership and his announcement, we are there to protect the people of Ontario when it comes to West Nile virus. We can't offer 100% protection, because there is a risk. But we are doing everything that we can do to educate, to inform and to ensure that larviciding and surveillance take place so that the people of Ontario are protected as much as possible as anywhere else in North America from this deadly disease.

Mr Hampton: Premier, last summer your government dropped the ball on West Nile, and over 1,000 people got sick.

In the gallery today is Janet Chappel. She knows all too well what happened. Her husband, Dr Robert Grisdale, was a very healthy, active 52-year-old until last summer, when he contracted West Nile virus on the Labour Day weekend. He is still recovering from encephalitis. Dr Grisdale and Janet Chappel want to know how many people will get sick this summer before you realize that this is a provincial issue, that mosquitoes do not respect provincial boundaries, that you're putting municipalities in the position where some of them will not have the money to do the full surveillance and the full prevention. If one municipality cannot do the work, then you put literally hundreds of thousands of people at risk.

Premier, the question is this: are you going to mismanage the West Nile virus the way your government did last summer and risk illness among thousands of people, or are you going to provide 100% of the funding for the full surveillance and prevention program that municipalities and public health units need? Which is it going to be?

Hon Mr Clement: Let me say to anyone who has been affected by West Nile virus, including Dr Grisdale, that it is unfortunate when anyone contracts this disease.

The fact of the matter is that there have been people all over North America who have contracted the disease, and I would not be honest to this Legislature if I stood in my place today and said that no one would be contracting the disease in the future. The fact of the matter is that West Nile virus is among us, West Nile virus is a threat, and we have to do everything we can do as individuals to protect ourselves and our families and to be part of the solution. But insofar as the Ontario government is concerned, with our seven-point action plan, announced on March 22 by myself, with the new province-wide larviciding standards that were announced on May 13 by the Premier, and with the budget announced by our Minister of Finance, which dedicated \$100 million over five years, we are at the forefront in battling this disease. Indeed, I would say that we are in the forefront in all of North America in battling this disease. For that, the people—

1430

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACT

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): I have a question for the Minister of Health. I want to ask you about a contract given by your ministry that's found in public accounts.

Around the time Tom Long joined the Monitor group, the Ministry Of Health gave the Monitor group contracts worth almost \$3 million. Can you tell the House today what Mr Long's company did to get that \$3-million con-

tract, and why money that was budgeted for health care, nurses, hospitals and doctors was used for that contract?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): If the honourable member would send me over particulars, I'd be happy to look into it.

Mr Duncan: The details are contained in the public accounts, which I would have assumed that you would have been aware of. They're out of your ministry. I want to remind you that this is not the first time one of Mr Long's companies has had a contract with the government. Around the time that he joined the Monitor group, the Ministry of Health entered into contracts worth \$3 million. That's \$3 million for his company.

We'd like three things from you today. First, will you agree to release the contract with Mr Long's company, the Monitor group? Second, will you release the results of the work that they did for your government? Third, will you release the request for proposals for the contract, if there was one? Will you agree to release that information today?

Hon Mr Clement: I will take those questions under advisement and get back to him as soon as possible.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): My question is for the Minister of Public Safety and Security. Some weeks ago—

Interjections.

Ms Mushinski: I know the Liberals across the way don't want to hear this question, but I'm going to ask it because the people in my riding of Scarborough Centre want to hear it.

Some weeks ago, this Legislature voted to endorse Ontario beginning discussions with Ottawa to transfer the responsibility of immigration pertaining to Ontario from the federal to the provincial level.

I know that this is something that we on this side of the House strongly believe in, as evidenced in this plan for the future called The Road Ahead.

I know that one of the concerns stems from the shocking revelations from the federal Auditor General that under the current federal Liberal government, tens of thousands of persons ordered deported from Canada are actually missing.

Minister, can you update us on what we have learned to date about this situation?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Public Safety and Security): I thank the member. I very much appreciate her concern.

Several weeks ago, Auditor General Sheila Fraser did draw attention to the fact that federal officials had lost track of some 36,000 individuals who had been ordered removed from this country. She also expressed concern that many of these people might pose a safety risk to Canadians. The federal Liberals, in typical fashion, said, "Don't worry; be happy." Well, we are worried and we're not happy. We've called on the federal government to provide us with details on these people. What are the

criminal backgrounds, if any? What potential security risks do any of these individuals pose to this province and this country? Ontarians have a right to know.

Ms Mushinski: Thank you for that, Minister. I agree with you: Ontarians do have a right to know.

Let me ask you: if in the course of cleaning up the mess that the federal Liberals have created, which they so often do, is the Ernie Eves government developing any overall plans or systemic oversight into how to prevent this kind of catastrophe in the future? Specifically, I would like to know what our government is doing to keep our neighbourhoods safe from those who may be using Ontario to further their illegal activities?

Hon Mr Runciman: First and foremost, we are convinced that the best time to prevent this abuse in the future is before persons who are not citizens seek entry into our country. That's why we support the North American security perimeter concept, and why we believe it's important for our province to have a Quebec-like agreement to provide Ontario with greater control over immigration.

We want biometrics to be used on documentation, so that it is almost impossible to use forged or faked documents to gain entry into Canada.

Finally, the federal government needs to deal with those who transport these individuals. Too many airlines allow travellers on to flights with very little or no documentation. When this happens on more than two or three occasions, we believe the landing privileges of these carriers should be suspended.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Just before we continue—if we could stop the clock for a quick moment. Members are trying to be cute and hold up copies of it. I would appreciate it if you wouldn't do it. The other side will get copies out there. I know a couple of members are doing it. I would just appreciate it if you wouldn't do it.

Interjections.

The Speaker: I know you know what's in it, so you probably don't need to read it.

ENERGY CONTRACTS

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): My question is for the Premier. Is the Premier still here?

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): If we could just stop the clock. I've got one yes and one no. Maybe we could go to the Deputy Premier then?

Mr Bryant: Few tactics offend consumers more than negative-option billing. Consumers end up stuck with a contract by default instead of by actively agreeing to a contract. It is the scourge of a predatory practice where a consumer gets stuck with a contract because of a tactic that is undertaken that is extremely offensive to consumers. When the cable industry did this, consumers went through the roof, and the government had to step in and fix it.

We have learned, thanks to a notice provided today by the Ontario Energy Board, that your government has recently passed a regulation to permit negative option

billing for electricity contracts. When this government is pretending to protect consumers with a bill before the House on this very subject on the Ontario Energy Board, how on earth could you open up this practice, when your record in terms of protecting consumers on the energy front has been a disaster? How could you have passed this regulation and hurt consumers in this fashion?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I'll refer that to the Minister of Energy.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, Government House Leader): What the member opposite says is not, in fact, the case. What we have done is put in place a set of initiatives and protections that have existed for many years for both electricity and natural gas. These are the exact same consumer protections or go substantially further, as we have for folks with mortgages, for subscriptions and for insurance.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Baird: Not at all, I say to the member for Windsor.

Many consumers in the province of Ontario have sought the stability of fixed-rate contracts for either gas or for electricity. People don't want a short time period or an action on their part to throw them on to a volatile spot market—a market they sought to avoid.

Mr Bryant: That is just not the case. This is what the Ontario Energy Board says: "Under new regulations passed by the Ontario government, natural gas and electricity supply contracts can be automatically renewed for one year." The consumers have to cancel the contract in writing within 30 days after receiving it. "If the consumer does not respond to the renewal notice"—it says here in the Ontario Energy Board notice—"and does not cancel after receiving the first bill, the contract is renewed for one year." That's negative-option billing.

To make matters worse, they're going to be signing on to a contract that takes them out of the price cap. You are forcing consumers off the price cap. Not only are you asleep at the switch, as you have been when it comes to electricity consumers for the past eight years, you are now actively working to create conditions that are going to royally harm consumers. How on earth could you have passed this regulation without telling the public, without telling consumers, and leave consumers in a situation where they've got negative-option billing and they are stuck with contracts that they simply don't deserve?

Hon Mr Baird: The member opposite doesn't let the facts get in the way. In fact, what we've put in place are some protections for consumers, to ensure that they have the ability to escape a volatile spot market if that's something that they have made a choice to do.

What we've said very specifically is, it's much like car insurance, who don't cut you off immediately if you don't renew your notice; there's a 30-day period where you have an opportunity to go back to the spot market, and then you've got a further 35 days after you get the first bill.

Many consumers, whether they be in the case the member opposite talks about, electricity—I assume he wouldn't be talking about consumers that are large commercial or industrial users—choose the benefits of a fixed-rate contract. We want to ensure that those protections for consumers that are in place, and others, are there; those consumer protections were in place for many years in Ontario.

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IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship. As you're aware, about 60% of all Canadian immigrants settle in Ontario. I think that's actually very good news. In fact, Ontario is a great place for all of us to live. Ontario has welcomed approximately 120,000 immigrants in the past 10 years. In light of the high volume of newcomers to our province, what is our government doing to assist newcomers to become established in this wonderful province? I could add, is the federal government responding with their fair share of funding?

Hon Carl DeFaria (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors): I thank my colleague the hard-working member for Durham for the question. Cultural diversity is one of our province's greatest strengths. Ontario spends approximately \$55 million a year on settlement, language training and labour market integration plans. Ontario provides language-training classes, services and job training, settlement services and business information for immigrant entrepreneurs.

Our government is doing its share but the federal government is not. Almost 60% of all of Canada's immigrants come to Ontario and settle here. The federal Liberal government spends less than 40% for integration programs in Ontario. Let me be clear: Ontario immigrants are not getting the fair share that immigrants in Quebec get. That's not fair.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you very much for that honest and passionate response. I know you take the issue of immigration very seriously.

It has come to my attention that the federal government keeps talking about increasing the number of people encouraged to come to Canada. Some say it's in the order of about 1%, which you know would come to about 300,000 immigrants a year. This increase would amount to about 80,000 immigrants over what Canada currently welcomes. I am curious about your previous response, that Ontario is paying its share while the federal government continues to deny equal treatment in Ontario. What is our government's position on increasing the opportunities for all new Canadians fairly, whether its Quebec or Ontario?

Hon Mr DeFaria: Yes, the federal Liberal government is talking about increasing immigrant levels, but it does not talk about increasing funding support for immigrants. Our government believes that increases in immigration must go hand in hand with increases in

federal funding. For example, a new immigrant to Quebec benefits from more than three times as much in federal funding as a new immigrant to Ontario. Ontario taxpayers are left to pick up the tab. Again, I say that's not fair. We have a made-in-Ontario plan to fix that.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Stop the clock. I just asked you to not use the props. I'd appreciate it. Two minutes after I ask it, you do it. You wonder why I get frustrated in this job. I've asked politely. What happens is that when you do it, then the other side does it. I know you think you're cute, but it just gets it up. I'd appreciate it if you wouldn't do it. Sorry for the interruption, but we have stopped the clock. The leader of the third party.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I have a question for the Minister of Finance. Recently, the Consumers' Association of Canada completed an exhaustive comparison of auto insurance rates in five Canadian cities, including Vancouver, where they have public auto insurance, and Toronto. This report concludes that the "fairest method for determining how much a consumer should pay for auto insurance is their driving record. The association does not support the discriminatory rating practices used in cities such as Calgary and Toronto."

This is yet another reason why private auto insurance results in much higher auto insurance premiums. All kinds of people are singled out on the basis of irrelevant factors, like their age or their gender, and forced to pay higher insurance rates than other drivers with exactly the same driving record that they have.

Minister, two simple questions: will you stop this kind of discriminatory insurance rate-setting that is central to the private insurance industry, and will you establish in Ontario a non-profit, public auto insurance system that will give the drivers of this province at least a 20% break in their insurance rates?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): We certainly appreciate and understand the pressure consumers are having with auto insurance. That's why we are taking the steps we are to bring better benefits to consumers and to put steps in place to help moderate the increases. One of the other things the honourable member knows is that there are checks and balances built into the system to ensure that ratings and rating factors are not discriminatory, and if that is the case, the superintendent can certainly take action on that.

But again, I find it a little ironic that the honourable member would raise in the House auto insurance when his own government at the time had the opportunity to do what he is now advocating. They didn't do it because they said it would cost too much. They didn't do it because they said it wouldn't work. So I do find his concern today a tad ironic.

Mr Hampton: The reason the NDP government didn't do it at the time was because Ontario's economy was in a very deep recession.

The consumers' association gives us a number of examples of lower rates—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. We'll let the member start again and have his time. It's just that they wouldn't be able to hear the question. The leader of the third party may start again.

Mr Hampton: The consumers' association gives some examples of the discriminatory practice and what it means. For example, they cite a young man with a perfect driving record in Vancouver with a 1992 Honda Civic. In Vancouver, he would pay \$1,378 for auto insurance. The same young driver in Toronto, subject to the discriminatory practices, with the same driving record, same car, would pay \$3,191. That is the difference between a public system where you're rated on the basis of your own driving record and the discrimination that is practised by the private insurance companies in Ontario.

Minister, my question to you is, do you stand by that unfairness or are you going to bring in a public insurance system which rates drivers on their own driving record and gives those who drive well a break on their insurance premiums?

Hon Mrs Ecker: The honourable member may think that bringing in a public system miraculously provides new monies to pay for the services consumers get. As he well knows, public systems find their savings in other things, like reduced benefits; in subsidization from other taxpayers, for example. It is not the solution he is making it out to be.

Secondly, if he was so concerned about helping consumers, as we on this side of the House are, with auto insurance, why is it that he voted against when we brought down the sales tax on auto insurance to help consumers? He voted against that. He obviously didn't think that would help consumers.

Thirdly, when we brought in legislation that would expand the rights of innocent victims to sue, that would expand the opportunity for consumers to get faster treatment when they were injured, he voted against that legislation.

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I have a question for the Minister of Education and Deputy Premier. I want to ask you about your private school tax credit that you have endorsed as Minister of Education, the bill being rushed through the Legislature and subject to closure yesterday.

You know, Minister, as you heard in estimates, that the money you're allowing, the millions of dollars, is being captured by high-end school tuition increases. You're sending this money out in public cheques to Albert College, \$29,000; they're going to increase their tuition next school year to \$31,000 courtesy of you. Similarly, Appleby College, thankful for your support, will be able to put their tuitions up from \$35,100 to

\$36,850. Ashbury College, \$28,850; after your donation of a new tax credit this year, it's going to be \$30,200.

So I want to ask you, Deputy Premier, how can you proceed with diverting hundreds of millions of dollars away from public education that lacks the basics when your tax credit is being captured up by high-end private schools in this fashion? How do you justify that?

1450

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I'll refer that to the Minister of Finance.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): I think, to the honourable member, we should be perfectly clear what the record is. This side of the House believes that the public education system is one of the basic building blocks for economic growth for the future success of our communities. That's why we have taken steps to increase the amount of money for public education, to raise the standards for public education, to ensure that parents have the supports they need so students can succeed—all of those being steps that they voted against.

Now let's look at the equity in education tax credit. We on this side of the House believe we should respect parental choice. On that side of the House in the Liberal Party, they only respect parental choice when it's the choice the Liberal Party wants them to make. We do not agree with that approach, and we've been very clear about that.

Mr Kennedy: We now have a clear illustration of the essential problem. There's no Minister of Education over there.

This is what the last Minister of Education, who is the Minister of Finance, said. She said, in a letter of January 13, 2000, that extending funding "would result in fragmentation of the education system in Ontario and undermine the goal of universal access."

Well, that's exactly what has happened. What has happened under this government is a 50% increase in enrolment in private schools, now 10 times the growth, such that one in four new Ontario students is going to private school, up from one in 16 under the previous government.

Again I want to ask you, since the Minister of Education won't defend public education, perhaps the Minister of Finance will tell us now if she's proud of how she has succeeded in fragmenting public education. And will she reconsider giving high-end schools the ability to raise tuition while public school students are denied English-as-a-second-language programs, denied textbooks and denied the class sizes they need to succeed?

Hon Mrs Ecker: The Minister of Education on this side of the House needs no lesson, sir, from you about how to advocate on behalf of public education. When we brought in higher standards, the new, tougher curriculum, standards for teacher professional development, all standards to raise the quality of education, that side of the House voted against it.

Secondly, when we brought in steps to respect parental choice, that side of the House voted against it.

Thirdly, no one on this side of the House would be supporting the equity in education tax credit if it were to take one dollar out of public education. That's why on this side of the House we have increased funding for public education by over \$2 billion, because we believe it is an important support for economic growth and the quality of our communities.

SARS

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question today is for the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Yesterday, a representative—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Stop the clock. We'll let the member speak. He's having trouble. We'll just let them settle down.

The member for Simcoe North has the floor.

Mr Dunlop: Yesterday, a representative of Health Canada, Dr Paul Gully, commented on Ontario's response to the SARS outbreak while speaking at a global conference in Malaysia. Dr Gully was reported in today's National Post as saying that the fight against SARS is complicated because, "A shortage of nursing home beds means seniors, those most susceptible to SARS, can spend too much time in acute care hospitals, risking exposure."

I would like to ask the associate minister, is there any truth whatsoever to this claim?

Hon Dan Newman (Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): It's always a pleasure to respond to the honourable member from Simcoe North.

I was disappointed to read those comments this morning, because the exact opposite is true in Ontario, and Health Canada ought to know that. The fact is, our government's response to the SARS outbreak included transferring non-SARS alternative level of care patients out of GTA hospitals and into two long-term-care facilities to help relieve the pressures on the hospitals. I want to add today that an additional facility was ready to assist, if needed.

If we indeed had a shortage of nursing home beds in Ontario, these transfers would not have been possible. It's pretty simple math. It's more than ironic that the federal government is spending so much time criticizing others when they should be spending their time, and most importantly their money, helping the people of Ontario recover from the consequences of SARS.

Mr Dunlop: I thank the associate minister for his response, but I'm not the least bit surprised to hear that there's no truth to the federal government's latest accusations. I agree that the Chrétien Liberals should step forward and keep their pledge of SARS assistance to Ontario. It seems that they're not even taking our request for SARS assistance seriously. That's a real disappointment, but again, it's not surprising, coming from the same government, the federal Liberal government, that doesn't give us a single penny for long-term care here in Ontario.

Long-term care for Ontario's seniors may not matter to the Liberals in Ottawa, but I know that it matters to the people of Ontario, and I know that it matters to the people in my riding of Simcoe North.

I ask the associate minister if he could speak about the absence of federal support for long-term care in this province.

Hon Mr Newman: I once again thank the hard-working member from Simcoe North for his question.

Ontario's population is growing and aging, and while the Ernie Eves government has made record investments in the sector, Ottawa is nowhere to be found. It's just like the federal government's lack of response to SARS. Ontario has spent almost \$1.5 billion on SARS, including compensation and recovery, and we need the federal government to provide immediate, significant federal disaster assistance to this province. The federal disaster assistance program, designed for situations just like this, provides for up to 90% assistance to the province, and that's exactly what we expect. We expect the federal government to contribute at least \$150 million in a down payment immediately, followed by the balance of more than \$900 million. We expect this for the people of Ontario.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): My question is to the Minister of Finance. Since 1997, about 10,000 Ontario property owners have signed up for the managed forest tax incentive program. It's a good program. It says, "Look, we recognize there's very little cash flow off a managed forest, so in return for your preserving the forest, we will assess a property at farm evaluation, and thus farm tax rates." It's an excellent program. It worked well. Unfortunately, though, in the last year the Municipal Property Assessment Corp, instead of assessing it on the basis of a woodlot, has chosen to assess it at its highest and best use. That has driven the tax rates up 200% to 600%, and it's causing the people who own these woodlots to be unable to continue to remain in the program.

Minister of Finance, you have the authority to have an impact, to evaluate it, as the commitment was made, at the farm tax evaluation level. Will you immediately implement that?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): Obviously, the honourable member has not been informed. I'd be quite happy to share correspondence with him. We have agreed to make sure that the assessment methodology that MPAC uses on managed forests is for current use. We've also made some other improvements to make sure that those who are protecting that land can indeed continue to protect it.

Mr Parsons: That's an excellent answer. Someone needs to tell MPAC and someone needs to tell the property owners, because as of yesterday afternoon, the municipalities were still continuing to set the evaluation

and in fact have sent the tax bills out and received interim payments based on the highest and best use.

So if indeed this has happened, it's great news, but I would then ask you, will you ensure that municipalities refund the money for the high tax rate that has been paid previously? They have paid it at the high rate, and the landowners are still out of pocket by a considerable amount. I'm assuming you're going to make it retroactive, because that was a commitment from 1997. Will you ensure that every property owner receives a rebate for their managed forest?

Hon Mrs Ecker: If there's a particular municipality and the honourable member wishes to send the information over to me, we'll certainly take a look at it. But we have communicated with MPAC; we have communicated with stakeholders. We are moving to ensure that the property tax assessment for managed forests continues to support those owners who are protecting very important land.

1500

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr AL McDonald (Nipissing): My question is for the Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I understand that June 17 was the fifth anniversary of the Tenant Protection Act. We've come a long way since the introduction of this act in protecting tenants' and landlords' rights. We've seen record investments in the rental housing stock and protection for tenants.

The Tenant Protection Act protects tenants against excessive rent increases by limiting above-guideline increases based on capital improvements. Dalton McGuinty has another idea to provide real rent control to tenants across this province. Minister, could you tell this House a little bit more about Dalton McGuinty's nonsense plan and how it will affect tenants in the province of Ontario?

Hon Tina R. Molinari (Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I want to thank the member for Nipissing for this very important question. When I look at the platform that the Liberals are proposing, I can see similarities between their policies now and the Liberal housing boondoggle in 1985. At that time, the then Liberal housing minister, Alvin Curling, suggested, "Rent controls could be lifted ... if the vacancy rates reached comfortable levels of about 3%."

This may sound familiar—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm going to interrupt the minister. Stop the clock. I would ask the members: you know you can phrase a question and get into that, but when you just simply ask a question like this—last warning—you know it has to relate to your own ministry.

I would say that there's a way to get into that very, very easily without being so blatant. If you do it—last warning—you lose the question and I go on in the rotation. I would thank all members. I'll let you wrap up. Again, if I could be very clear to those who are writing the answers and so on, so I don't need to get up again in

the days coming up, if it does get to be something as blatant as that one clearly was, without any spin whatsoever, then I'm simply going to go on to the question and you're going to lose it.

Minister?

Hon Mrs Molinari: The Liberal platform, in comparison to what we have in place today, if they were to consistently go on the 3%—a Globe and Mail article of June 16 said that the vacancy rate in Toronto jumped to 3.5% in April. So I'm just trying to point out that the truth is that the Liberals' real rent control is really no rent control for Toronto.

Mr McDonald: I understand our legislation was so much stronger. I wonder, Minister, if you can speak to this and what the differences are between our protection plan and that of the Liberal government.

Hon Mrs Molinari: The Tenant Protection Act that we have in place is far-reaching and far beyond what the opposition has put in place in the past. I want to highlight that in the past under the Liberal government, there were several examples of unacceptable rent increases, which averaged 12% annually. One such example was a tenant in Brockville. The landlord had asked for a 26.5% increase. However, under the Liberal rule, the landlord wasn't awarded the 26%; they were awarded 29.5%.

This is difficult to—

The Speaker: I'm sorry. We're going to continue on. Again, I know it made it a little bit difficult when you were into the second question. I thought you would have been able to ad lib it. I understand that sometimes that's not possible. But just for everybody, I want to be very clear that if it happens tomorrow, we go right over to the other side. We're not going to put up with that any more.

The member of the NDP, new question?

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-Baie James): Ma question est au Chair of Management Board. Monsieur Tsubouchi, j'ai eu la situation juste dernièrement que la communauté de Hearst voulait faire application à un de vos programmes provinciaux à travers le Patrimoine vital. Quand ils ont été pour faire l'application à Patrimoine vital, spécifiquement le programme numéro 5, ils ont visité le site Web du gouvernement et ont trouvé aucun français, premièrement sur le site Web, mais quand ils ont téléphoné pour avoir les applications en français pour être capables de faire application au programme numéro 5, la ville de Hearst et le conseiller, M. Rhéaume, ont été dits qu'il n'y avait pas de formulaire en français du tout. Quand il a demandé de parler à quelqu'un en français pour être capable de traiter cette demande, on lui a dit, « Il n'y a pas de personnel dans le staff du Patrimoine vital pour être capable de traiter la demande. »

Monsieur le ministre, pensez-vous que c'est acceptable que ce gouvernement ne donne pas de services en

français à la communauté de Hearst et autres communautés francophones ?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture): I'm not clear about the program the member is talking about. Maybe he could clear that up in the second part of the question. I'm not quite sure if he was asking me—he started by asking me as Chair of Management Board. I'm assuming you're asking me as the Minister of Culture.

Mr Bisson: Chair of Management Board.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Chair of Management Board for a heritage program?

M. Bisson: Chair of Management Board, faisant affaire avec les services en français pour le programme Patrimoine vital. C'est l'un des programmes clés de ce gouvernement.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Once again, I'm not quite clear on the program. Usually the heritage programs are through the Ministry of Culture, so I'm not aware of what he's asking me for. If he's asking about whether or not the services should be in French, they should be, and certainly I'll look into it once I have the details from the member.

M. Bisson: Je ne sais pas quoi dire à ce point-ci. Que le ministre de la Couronne ne sait pas son propre programme, qui est le Patrimoine vital—straight translation, "Living Legacy." Je penserais qu'au moins le gouvernement saurait son propre programme. La ville de Hearst a fait demande sous Patrimoine vital pour être capable d'avoir une application pour des fonds pour le reboisement dans la région de Hearst. Quand la municipalité, à travers le conseiller, M. Rhéaume, a fait application, on est allé au site Web. Il n'y avait aucun service en français. Vous êtes le ministre qui s'assure que tous les services du gouvernement sont donnés en français.

Deuxièmement, quand il a parlé au staff, on lui a dit qu'il ne pouvait pas avoir un formulaire en français et, numéro deux, qu'il n'y avait aucun staff pour traiter sa demande en français.

Je vous demande de corriger ce programme et cette erreur. Allez-vous le faire, oui ou non ?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: The member has now cleared up what the program was. He said Living Legacy. Living Legacy is natural resources, not Management Board. No wonder I don't know the program. It's not my program. Ask the right minister, for God's sake.

WALKERTON TRAGEDY

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a question for the Minister of the Environment. We've talked with Anne Fraser from Walkerton about the difficulties her family is having with the government compensation package. Anne is the mother of three teenagers. Prior to Walkerton she was a regular mom with a regular job, with a regular family, regular lifestyle. She lived in a three-bedroom house with her kids. She was in good health except for a bad knee.

Anne is the mother of three teenagers, but that's about all that remains in her life. After she drank contaminated water in May 2000, she had to quit her job. She has chronic diarrhea, her joints are constantly aching, her muscles are weak, her vision is impaired. She's a 40-year-old, she says, but she feels like she's 70. She can go to work and come home and that's it for her. She doesn't dare do any more, she says. She has had to sell her three-bedroom house and has moved into a basement apartment with her kids.

I ask the Minister of the Environment, why is your government preventing a woman with so many problems from getting adequate and fair compensation as a result of the situation in Walkerton when your government promised that you were going to provide that to her?

1510

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Minister of the Environment): I'd be happy to look into the case that the honourable member has brought forward if he wants to provide me with the details. We take these matters quite seriously on this side of the House.

Mr Bradley: The Premier of the province is likely to show up in Walkerton sometime to have a flashy announcement about the water centre in Walkerton. When he is there, would the Minister of the Environment suggest to the Premier of this province that he meet with Anne Fraser and others who, after months and months of working with adjustors, have lost any hope that they will receive anywhere near the amount of compensation needed to cover expenses such as she has had to cover thus far and will have to cover the rest of her life? She's been in and out of hospitals and doctors' offices since she fell ill. She's had to travel to London, Kincardine and Owen Sound. Her entire family has faced hardship, and the government is only willing to give her \$7,500 to cover everything—her travel, her medical bills, her lost days, her pain and suffering—\$7,500.

Will you suggest to the Premier of this province that when he goes up to Walkerton to make his announcement with so much fanfare, with the Tory cameras going behind them because you'll have them there for campaign purposes—will you ask him to meet with Anne Fraser and the others who are hard done by because this government is failing to keep its promise to the people of Walkerton?

Hon Mr Wilson: Well, I think our government responded very quickly and in a fair manner to the needs of the people of Walkerton. I come from that part of the province and I know first-hand that we were on the ground responding.

With respect to compensation claims and the needs that certain people have now, there is a court-monitored process in place. Mr Flaherty was the Attorney General at the time and responded very quickly to make sure that a fair process was in place. You know, coming from not too far away from Walkerton, I've not heard a lot of complaints.

I will take very seriously the matter you've raised, and I'll get back to the honourable member if he provides me with all of the details. I want to make sure the honourable member is telling the family involved, though, that they have rights under the court process, and we want to make sure that they exercise all of the rights that they have, because we want to be fair to them.

VISITORS

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): When she was six years old, Alicia Harvie rescued her mother and sister from their burning home. Today, Alicia, who is now eight, was honoured by receiving the Ontario Fire Marshal's Fire Safety Award. Alicia Harvie is here, with her sister, Thya Harvie, her mother, Amanda Harvie, her dad, Brian Levesque, and fire prevention officer Tom Nenadovich and his wife, Linda Nenadovich, from Welland. I hope the House will join me in welcoming them.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): We welcome our honoured guest.

PETITIONS

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I have a petition signed by thousands of people, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the citizens of Kent county and Chatham had no direct say in the creation of the municipality of Chatham-Kent in 1997; and

"Whereas the Ontario government, by regulation and legislation, forced the amalgamation in accordance with the Meyboom report against the will of the elected local and county officials; and

"Whereas the municipality has not delivered the promised streamlined, more efficient and accountable local government, nor the provision of improved services at reduced costs;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, demand that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Immediately rescind the forced amalgamation order and return our local municipal government to the citizens in a two-tier model of government to be approved by referendum by the electorate in the 2003 municipal election."

HOME CARE

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition again concerns the termination of homemaking services by the Manitoulin-Sudbury Community Care Access Centre.

"Whereas we are outraged by the community care access centre's decision to cut homemaking services to seniors;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) Provide enough resources to the Manitoulin-Sudbury Community Care Access Centre so that they can provide homemaking services; and

"(2) Instruct Associate Minister Dan Newman to attend a public meeting in Sudbury with MPP Rick Bartolucci to hear stories about what will happen when homemaking services are cut off to these clients."

Of course, I affix my signature to this petition, as I did last week and yesterday, and I give it to Brittany to bring to the table.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we strenuously object to the proposed Richmond landfill expansion by Canadian Waste Services; and

"Whereas fractured limestone is an inappropriate location for a landfill; and

"Whereas the town of greater Napanee produces less than 1% of the waste sent to the Richmond landfill; and

"Whereas the Ernie Eves government has indicated that they will break their promise that no community should have to accept waste against their will; and

"Whereas the courts have ruled that the present terms of reference are invalid;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We request that the Conservative government keep their promise, stop the expansion of this landfill and make waste reduction a priority for Ontario."

I will affix my signature to this petition because I am in full agreement.

SERVICE DE DIALYSE

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): J'ai une pétition et c'est M^{me} Thérèse Bezel qui l'a organisée à Kapuskasing pour Marie-Ève Chenier. Elle se lit ainsi :

« Nous, les soussignés, demandons au gouvernement de l'Ontario d'agir sans délai dans le dossier de Marie-Ève Chenier qui requiert le service quotidien de dialyse à la maison. Marie-Ève était candidate pour recevoir ce service sous peu. Cependant, mercredi dernier, faute de financement de gouvernement de l'Ontario, l'hôpital Riverside d'Ottawa lui a refusé ce service. Nous demandons au gouvernement conservateur de Ernie Eves d'écouter ses citoyens et de rapidement agir. »

J'ai signé cette pétition.

TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE AND ACUPUNCTURE

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): I have a petition here in support of the regulation of traditional Chinese medicine and acupuncture.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas traditional Chinese medicine ... including acupuncture, has been practised successfully for over 5,000 years and has improved the health of billions of people worldwide with an emphasis on prevention and treating the cause of illness and not just the symptoms; and

"Whereas there are thousands of unregulated individuals practising acupuncture and traditional Chinese medicine in Ontario without any regulations, standards of care or professional training requirements; and

"Whereas the failure of the provincial government to protect consumers by regulating TCM/acupuncture places Ontarians at risk because any person can now practise TCM and acupuncture without any qualifications or standards whatsoever; and

"Whereas TCM/acupuncture is regulated in over 40 states in the US and in the provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, Quebec, and these jurisdictions have passed legislation to regulate practitioners of TCM/acupuncture in order to provide safe, effective and high standards of care to the general public; and

"Whereas hundreds of thousands of Ontarians have experienced the benefits of TCM/acupuncture and are culturally linked to traditional Chinese medicine, given the diverse origins of so many Ontarians; and

"Whereas we spend over \$2 billion a month in Ontario on western medical treatment and virtually nothing on preventive, complementary or alternative medical practices such as TCM that not only prevent illness and promote wellness, but also save taxpayers billions of dollars in drug costs and hospital stays;

"We, the undersigned, urge the provincial government of Ontario and all MPPs to pass legislation as soon as possible based on the British Columbia model to allow for the regulation of TCM/acupuncture and establish a college of TCM/acupuncture of Ontario, and set standards of care and training qualifications for practitioners in Ontario so that all Ontarians can safely enjoy all the benefits of TCM/acupuncture from highly qualified and trained practitioners."

I will affix my signature for I am in full agreement and Caitlyn will take it to the desk.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The Chair recognizes the member for Durham.

OAK RIDGES MORaine

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Thank you, Mr Speaker. It's a surprise that you said "Durham." I'm pleased to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on behalf of my constituents in the wonderful riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Oak Ridges moraine is an ecological treasure that warrants protection and careful stewardship now and in future generations; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario has recognized the importance of the moraine with the passage of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001, to protect natural and water resources, preserve agricultural land and provide clarity on where development can and cannot occur; and

"Whereas the act has resulted in certain limitations on citizens' use of their own property within the moraine;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Parliament of Ontario take action to ensure there are no undue restrictions on Oak Ridges moraine residents making minor improvements to their homes and property; and

"That the province of Ontario work" together "with municipalities and landowners to ensure the interpretation and enforcement of the act continues to fully protect the moraine while also giving residents the right to fair and reasonable enjoyment of their property."

I'm pleased to read this in the presence of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, as well as present it to Lucas, who's from the riding of Oxford and is serving us here in the Legislature.

1520

AUDIOLOGY SERVICES

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): "Listen: Our Hearing is Important!"

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas services delisted by the Ontario provincial government now exceed \$100 million in total; and

"Whereas Ontarians depend on audiologists for the provision of qualified hearing assessments and hearing aid prescriptions; and

"Whereas new provincial government policy will virtually eliminate access to publicly funded audiology assessments across" this province; and

"Whereas this policy will lengthen waiting lists for patients and therefore have a detrimental effect on the health of these Ontarians;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned" residents of Peterborough, Stratford and Pembroke, "demand the Eves government move immediately to permanently fund audiologists directly for the provision of audiology services."

I'm in full agreement, and I've affixed my signature hereto.

ITER

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's a pleasure to see you in the chair, Mr Speaker. I have another petition here from my wonderful riding of Durham.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the proposed ITER fusion research facility would result in 68,000 person-years of employment and an estimated \$9.4 billion in foreign investment;

"Whereas ITER would bring international scientists and researchers to Canada and place our nation in the forefront of new developments in research and technology;

"Whereas ITER is strongly supported by business, labour, educators, elected officials and citizens throughout Durham region, the host community;

"Whereas the province of Ontario has already recognized the economic importance of ITER to Canada and the world by committing \$300 million to support the Canadian ITER bid;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: that the Parliament of Ontario take the necessary steps to strengthen the Canadian bid for the ITER research facility, including the commitment of more funds and other resources to support a" greater "Canadian bid; and that the province of Ontario ask the federal government to show the leadership and commitment necessary for Canada to win the ITER bid."

I'm pleased to present this—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Further petitions?

VISITORS

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex):

On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to recognize the grade 5 students, the teacher and the parents from the Sacred Heart Catholic school in Parkhill, Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): That is not a point of order, but we welcome them to our Legislature.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas sexual harassment is the most significant occupational health and safety hazard for women in the workplace; and

"Whereas the Ontario Human Rights Code guarantees the right to work in an environment free from sexual harassment, there is no effective remedy under the current legislative regime to immediately stop the sexual harassment, remove the dangerous behaviour and keep workers in their jobs;

"Whereas sexual harassment can occur in any workplace setting, can cause health and safety risks and lower employee productivity;

"Whereas employers often fail to develop strict anti-harassment policies in the workplace, because presently it is simply left to their own goodwill to implement such policies;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That measures contained in Bill 55, the Occupational Health and Safety Amendment Act, presented by Pat Hoy, MPP, Chatham-Kent Essex, be immediately enacted. This bill puts teeth in the right to be free from workplace sexual harassment and provides enforcement mechanisms that operate to immediately stop the harassment and to protect and keep the worker in their job."

I, of course, have signed this petition.

DIALYSIS

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmings-James Bay): I realize I was being blocked by the member from Algoma, who's just getting in my way.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: He meant well, he meant well. I don't say anything bad.

I've got probably the better part of a couple of thousand names that were gathered by Thérèse Bezel, who went around with other volunteers in regard to Marie-Ève Chenier. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, are asking the government of Ontario to act without delay in the case of Marie-Eve Chenier, who requires the daily home services of hemodialysis. Marie-Eve Chenier was one of the candidates scheduled to receive this service. However, the lack of funding by the Ontario government has forced the Riverdale Hospital in Ottawa to eliminate Marie-Eve from the program. Marie-Eve was advised of this decision last Wednesday. We, the taxpayers of Ontario, ask the Conservative government of Ernie Eves to listen to its taxpayers and act promptly so that Marie-Eve can get her hemodialysis."

I have signed that petition, and I congratulate all who worked on this.

HIGHWAY 407

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): With your permission, Mr Speaker, I just wanted to make a comment. To the students from Sacred Heart school, the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex is one of the best members in this House.

I'm privileged to read a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham:

"Whereas the timely and efficient movement of people and products is crucial to the success of the Ontario economy;

"Whereas the province of Ontario is meeting the challenge of traffic congestion in the greater Toronto area by making improvements to our highway networks and by improved public transportation;

"Whereas the further construction of Highway 407 eastward into the Durham region would improve the flow of traffic in Durham region and throughout the GTA;

"Whereas the citizens and municipalities of Durham region have faced uncertainty over the final alignment of

the proposed 407 highway for many years and are entitled to a timely resolution to this matter;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Parliament of Ontario take all necessary steps to fast-track the extension of Highway 407 eastward into the regional municipality of Durham, while also ensuring that all the necessary environmental assessment and public consultations are followed."

I'm pleased to sign this, endorse it and hand it on to Timothy, who is the page serving his last week here in the Legislature.

HYDRO RATES

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Royal Canadian Legion branch 429 in Wawa has a long-standing tradition of promoting the mandate and ideals of the Royal Canadian Legion in serving Wawa;

"Whereas the members of the Royal Canadian Legion branch 429 in Wawa are the contribution that the branch has made in serving the Royal Canadian Legion in Wawa;

"Whereas this long-standing tradition has been compromised due to negative changes in the local economy, changes in provincial legislation respecting charitable gaming laws, and other socio-economic changes within society in general;

"Whereas the deregulation of hydro in the province of Ontario has had a devastating effect on the branch to pay the power rates;

"Whereas the cumulative effect of all of the above changes has jeopardized the future and integrity of the organization;

"Whereas a motion has been unanimously passed at the general meeting of the Royal Canadian Legion branch 429 held on June 12, 2003, requesting the executive to write to the government of Ontario with regard to the outlandish power rates and request immediate action by the government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately and retroactively reduce the electrical distribution charges in the Great Lakes Power area so that Great Lakes Power customers no longer pay the highest power rates in Ontario."

This is signed by president Richard Watson and by Eric Mitrikas, the first vice-president of the branch.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO ENERGY BOARD CONSUMER PROTECTION AND GOVERNANCE ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LA PROTECTION DES CONSOMMATEURS ET LA RÉGIE DE LA COMMISSION DE L'ÉNERGIE DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 17, 2003, on the motion for second reading of Bill 23, An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Act, 1998 and the Municipal Franchises Act in respect of consumer protection, the governance of the Ontario Energy Board and other matters / Projet de loi 23, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario et la Loi sur les concessions municipales en ce qui a trait à la protection des consommateurs, à la régie de la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario et à d'autres questions.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): I think in the rotation of things, the NDP caucus has the floor. So I recognize the member from Timmins-James Bay.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Mr Speaker, I am so glad you recognized me in this debate. This is a really important debate. I've got to say that I'm quite happy today to have an opportunity to speak to this, because we are talking about probably one of the most fundamental issues to not only to the Ontario economy but specifically the northern economy.

You'll know that in the place I come from, northern Ontario, we have the largest hydro utility customers in the province of Ontario. In fact, the one customer who buys more hydro than anybody else in Ontario is in the city of Timmins: Falconbridge. They operate the metallurgical site in Timmins, where they operate three different lines—a refinery, a smelter and a concentrator—and the zinc plant, and are the biggest utilizers of electricity in the province of Ontario.

You have other companies like Tembec who operate everything from paper mills to saw mills and pulp mills, all across not only my riding, but other parts of the province. You have customers like Domtar, Buchanan and a number of other mills who are some of the highest utilizers of electricity in the province of Ontario. So if anybody is affected by hydro policy in this province, it is certainly those particular employers in northern Ontario, because they are about the largest users of hydro in Ontario. A lot of people don't recognize that. They would think GM, Ford or one of the big auto plants would be the biggest customers. But in fact, it's mines and mills, because of the amount of electricity they have to use for the processes of extracting ore from the rock into finished product.

1530

I have to say to the Minister of Energy: John, we told you so. We stood in this House, my leader Howard

Hampton, myself and others—well, you weren't the Minister of Energy at the time. We told Jim that and he didn't believe us. We told Jim, now Minister of the Environment, and part-time Northern Development and Mines, "If the government moves to deregulate and the government moves to privatize Hydro, it would be a disaster to the economy of Ontario and its citizens." When we looked at the experiences of deregulation and privatization across not only North America, but into Europe and other places, there are no real examples that you can point to that say, "Wow, here's a place where we've opened the market and we've deregulated and privatized, and hydro prices have gone down over the longer term." Now, in California, one could argue that initially there was a bit of a drop in prices, but after the companies got the greed factor in and they started trying to figure out how they could gouge more and more money—like the insurance companies are doing in automobile insurance and other insurances—they couldn't help themselves. They started taking huge profits, to the chagrin of the California economy. In fact, as the leader of deregulation, California is now moving in the opposite direction. They're saying, "What a disaster." It has led to all kinds of problems: brownouts in California, higher energy prices, plant shutdowns, seniors and people on fixed incomes who can't afford to pay their electricity rates—everybody was a loser. Finally, California had to start moving in the other direction.

Remember that song, Alberta Bound? I can sing it, Speaker; I know the words, and my guitar is in the back. If you let me bring it in, I'll sing it.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: Speaker, are you trying to say you don't want to hear my lovely voice?

The Deputy Speaker: Don't ask me now.

Mr Bisson: OK. Maybe another time. Maybe we can do it in another venue.

Alberta, the one province in Canada that's probably the most Conservative of provinces—for years they've elected more right-wing governments than Ontario; it was either Social Credit or it was Conservative. And even their flirtation with privatization, as we pick up the *Globe and Mail* and the *National Post*, those right-wing papers—which I like to read every morning, because they tell me what the other guys are doing. About a month ago they were running articles saying that, basically, they've had to admit that deregulation and privatization was wrong, that it doesn't work and that it has led to higher prices.

I'm just going to use the opportunity of this debate to say what it has meant to people and industries in northern Ontario. On a number of occasions, I've raised in this House the bills that citizens in my constituency were having to pay when it came to higher Hydro rates. I was telling you about a number of small businesses in my riding—restaurants, tool and dye shops, carpentry shops, welding shops—who contacted me over the year to say, "Gilles, if I was paying \$600 or \$1,200 for electricity on a monthly bill last year, prior to deregulation, I'm paying

twice that and more now. Tell me how I'm a winner, Gilles, with privatization and deregulation." A lot of them didn't really understand the issue, because most people, let's admit it, don't follow the details of what government does. All they really pay attention to is the final effect. In fact, I've had a lot of small businesses come to me and say, "Gilles, how come my Hydro rates went up? I used to pay \$600 last year; I'm paying \$1,200 to \$1,400 this year for the same amount of electricity." I said, "Well, did you know that Ernie Eves opened the market and then basically had to backtrack somewhat and put a cap in place that really doesn't apply to you because of the usage of electricity you have?" They said, "No, I wasn't aware of the details. All I know is I'm paying more." In this House, I've raised all kinds of examples of businesses in my riding that have been negatively affected by Hydro deregulation and the failed attempt to privatize.

I've raised cases of individuals, like Mr Bergeron in Kapuskasing, who's a senior on a fixed income; he's now retired. He's had to pay over double what he used to pay before.

I have other cases here. I just happened to open my householder and I've got another one here. Mr Hansen on Government Road, when you look at the hydro bills, was basically paying—I believe if I take a look at this, this is for the month of March. March this year, he had to pay \$542 for electricity. Can you imagine paying \$542 for electricity in the month of March? In March the year before, he was paying but half that. If you take a look in the winter months, it was even higher. If you take a look at the period of February, he was up to \$834. How can this gentleman afford to pay that?

Mr Adams, again from Kapuskasing, brought in his hydro bills and he's upset. He says, "Here I am in the month of May and I'm having to pay \$660 for electricity." May 2003: \$660 for electricity. If you keep on going through the bills, the month before he was paying—I've got to get the right page. That's the other thing. These bills have become so complicated to read. We've unbundled the price, and you can't even read the bill any more. Here we've got \$318 that he paid the year before compared to \$660 this year.

Hydro bill after hydro bill has demonstrated that the whole policy of the government to open and deregulate the market has been nothing but a disaster. We have been saying since before the onset of deregulation and privatization that hydro bills would go up. The government said, "Oh, Howard Hampton, you don't know what you're talking about. You're just saying that because you're fearmongering." Here we are but a year later—just barely a year later—and in fact what we said was right, because hydro prices have gone up.

That's why we, in our Public Power platform, are advocating that we put an end to deregulation and privatization so that at the end we're able to put hydro back under public control so that we can bring some stability to rates and provide power at cost to consumers

because, quite frankly, electricity is a big part of what drives our economy.

We believe that. It's something we want to do. We know it's something you can do, because we did it before. If you look at hydro prices in Canada, the cheapest rates for electricity are where? The province of Quebec and the province of Manitoba, and both have public hydro. It's a little bit like the auto insurance issue that we raised today, but that's for another debate.

You would also know that my colleagues Tony Martin, Shelley Martel and Howard Hampton, all of us northern members, have kicked off a northern tour. We're travelling this spring and summer to communities across northern Ontario to talk to communities, industry and individuals about what's happening in their communities vis-à-vis job losses that we're seeing happen.

In fact, I was in Sault Ste Marie on Monday—that's why I was not here—with my colleague Mr Martin where we boarded a Beaver airplane at the bush plane museum in Sault Ste Marie to go and visit the communities of Wawa, Dubreuilville and White River.

These are some of the notes I took when I was in these meetings. Quite frankly, what these people are telling us is really scary. For example, we spoke to Norm Lecuyer who is, I believe, the general manager for River Gold, and he basically talked about how energy prices for River Gold in Wawa have led to over \$200,000 more in actual cost to the company as compared to last year. The government and others say, "Well, \$200,000, they're a profitable company. They can probably absorb that."

Mining is a very finite business. You have to spend money on exploration every year to replace the ore that you've identified and mined this year so that in future years you have ore that's identified to mine in the following years. What he told us is, "That \$200,000, we had to get it by cutting our exploration project back by over \$200,000." He's saying, "What this is doing is shortening the life of the mine." Monsieur Lecuyer said they basically could not afford to pay these rates for hydro, because it was cutting into their bottom line to the point that it's making it difficult for them.

I don't believe River Gold is in a position of having to shut down, thank God, and I don't want to see that, but I can tell you that an extra \$200,000 in costs to that company is a lot. This is a government that likes to take pride in saying, "We lowered taxes." Well, yes, you lowered taxes. Sure, you might have lowered \$20,000 in taxes for River Gold last year, but you're charging them \$200,000 in extra energy charges. That is not a good thing. Plus, you also regulate how we price gas in the province of Ontario, which is yet another debate. Gas costs for these companies are going through the roof and leading to very bad times.

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We went to Dubreuilville and we spoke to a number of people there. Mr Leo Raymond was there, who is the mayor of White River. We met with Mr Mike Mantha, who is the IWA rep there, and a number of other people, including Mr Dave Jennings, who is the manager of the

local mill in Dubreuilville. In Dubreuilville there is a forestry operation, in a community of 1,000 people, that employs 450 people. As a result of the energy prices of Great Lakes Power in that community, energy prices for Dubreuil lumber have gone up by 75%. You tell me what business is able to make a 75% increase on the selling price of an item over one year. Even MPPs only got 25% last time, and we, as New Democrats, think that's somewhat excessive considering what other people are getting. We don't see people in the retail business increasing their prices by 75%.

Imagine what would happen if the province of Ontario or the government of Canada were to say, "We're increasing our taxes to corporations by 75%?" They'd be saying and doing what's happening in Dubreuilville. They're going from employment of 450 people and dropping down to 150. That's a lot of jobs in a community of 1,000 people.

When we sat down there and talked to the workers, they were plenty upset. They were saying, "We can't afford to sit around in Dubreuilville for the next year wondering if we're going to get rehired. We're going to start looking for jobs elsewhere if we can find them."

For Dubreuilville that's a huge issue because their municipal assessment is going to go down. They can't sell the houses, so the houses are going to go vacant. When the company reopens to full employment levels, once we fix the problems with hydro and a couple of other issues, where is Dubreuilville going to get these qualified workers who understand the plant? The skilled tradespeople, the skilled men and women who work in the plant and understand the production methods, the people who are harvesting in the bush: you just don't go get those people in downtown Toronto. Those are skills that are learned over a lifetime. You can't replace them just like that.

One of the things the company and Dave Jennings were telling us was that it's bad enough that we have to lay off. They feel really bad about it but they're saying that if this goes on for any period of time, they're really worried about what it means overall when they come to reopen and get back up to employment levels. They're saying, "Where are we going to find all these people? Are they going to be willing to come back?"

I guess the bad part of this answer is that they'll come back if the economy is bad elsewhere, which is a double whammy, and they won't come back if the economy is good elsewhere.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa West-Nepean): What did Bob Rae say Saturday night?

Mr Bisson: Bob Rae restructured those communities. As a New Democrat, I can tell you that when Sault Ste Marie, Kapuskasing, Sturgeon Falls, Atikokan and Thunder Bay were going down the tubes, our government was there. We sat down with the communities, the companies, the unions and the workers. We said, "Let's help to restructure," and we restructured those companies, and those communities survived.

I represent Kapuskasing. I was not the member for Kapuskasing at the time, it was Mr Len Wood, but I can tell you that when Kapuskasing was going through what Dubreuilville is now, we were there as a government looking for solutions. The solution the company and the workers brought forward was employee ownership.

I'm not arguing that we have to do employee ownership in Dubreuilville, but if it's the only option, maybe the government should be at the table. Here's the message we were told by the communities of Wawa, White River and Dubreuilville: the government is missing in action. They said they had been trying to get hold of ministers to deal with their issues. They've been trying to get hold of the Minister of Energy, who will not get back to them. They've been trying to get hold of the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and the Minister of Natural Resources, who supposedly represent northern ministries, but who can't find time to get off their busy schedules in downtown Toronto and go into the north and deal with the issues.

They are at least thankful that my colleague Tony Martin and I, and later on Shelley Martel and Howard Hampton, are taking the time to talk to these communities. They know that if we, as New Democrats, were given the opportunity to govern again, we would deal with these issues. Why do I say that? Tony Martin knows. He comes from Sault Ste Marie. His city is alive today because of the NDP government. St Marys Paper, Algoma Steel, Algoma Central Railroad are all major employers in the community of Sault Ste Marie. If hadn't been for Tony Martin and the NDP, those things would never have been restructured. Why? Because Conservatives believe in non-intervention in the economy. Their philosophical, ideological and political belief is very simple: let market forces dictate. If market forces dictate that a mill has to close in northern Ontario, well, that's the way it's got to be. That's why government is not responding. Well, as a New Democrat, I don't accept that.

Government has a responsibility. The economy of Toronto has certain synergies so that we know it will sort of look after itself to a certain extent. But with economies like Wawa, Dubreuilville, White River, Smooth Rock Falls, Cochrane, Kirkland Lake, Kapuskasing, Sault Ste Marie, and the list goes on, the synergies of Toronto are not there. Government has to be at the table.

So when we met these people, they said, "If you can bring but one message back, tell them to give us a call. Tell them to come and visit us. Set up an interministerial committee to deal with the issues.

Interjection: I've been up there.

Mr Bisson: You've been up there? You wouldn't even know where to find the highway. My point is, imagine that you've got a community of 1,000 people and you're losing 600 jobs, as you are in White River. The White River plant—

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): It was 285.

Mr Bisson: It was 285 jobs. Excuse me. I correct the record.

In White River, a community of 800 to 1,000, people are losing the only employer in town, Domtar, that has large numbers. There are some business opportunities there as far as local hotels, tourist outfitters and others are concerned, and they're much needed, but the cornerstone of the economy for these people is those particular mills. You've got companies, as in White River, that are basically shutting down and saying to workers, "We're down for six months to a year." Why? Because electricity costs are too high, we have problems with allocation of timber, and yes, the American dollar is low and that's affecting our trade with the United States. Yes, there are other issues, but they're saying to us, "At least deal with the issues the province has responsibility for." If we had the government move on hydro issues and deal with the MNR issues, it would mitigate some of the dangers we're having on the other side of the equation leading to the announced shutdown.

So you've got that community's major employer going down for six months to a year, and they're worried about the same thing: what's going to happen down the road?

Mr Guzzo: Saturday Night, Focus Ontario, what did Bob Rae say?

Mr Bisson: Oh, the judge.

You have to intervene in those situations. You cannot take a noninterventionist approach to the northern economy, as you should not take a noninterventionist approach to other parts of our economy across this province. Government has a responsibility, and what we're trying to tell you is that as we tour the northern part of the province on our northern economic tour, people are telling us the government is missing in action. We need to get an interventionist government that is prepared to work with us as communities to try to find solutions.

I'm going to Smooth Rock Falls in my riding. I go there almost every weekend, but I'm going to be setting up a meeting and will continue the tour with Smooth Rock Falls, Cochrane and Kirkland Lake in a couple of weeks. I already know where we're going to meet because I've been talking to some of these people in my riding, and I'm sure it's the same thing in the other communities. They're having one heck of a time. What is it? It's electricity prices directly under the control of the province of Ontario. In the case of Smooth Rock Falls, it's the availability of chips, with sawmills shutting down across the province because of electricity prices and, yes, CVA. They're in the position of not having enough chips to go around.

Marathon is in danger of shutting down as well. Smooth Rock Falls is now down for two weeks, and god knows what's going to happen. Bowater is another. What ends up happening is that those communities are saying, "We need the government at the table to deal with this. We have a loss of chips. How are we going to deal with that?" Do you know what the government's response has been up to now? "Chip roundwood." Can you imagine? They're taking dimensional-sized saw timber that should

go into sawmills and they're going to be chipping it. What a waste of a resource to do that.

There are certainly other things we can do. We've got timber that's going over to Quebec every day by way of Highway 101. The government could at least stop that timber from going over there, so that we can at least process it here.

We'll continue with our northern tour and continue advocating that this government has a responsibility. If they're not willing to take it, we will.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): The member just spoke for about 20 minutes, and he hasn't said much. One of the things he said was the government was missing in action. How wrong could he be? The government that has created more than a million jobs in this province is the best government there has ever been. The government has created jobs for 625,000 people who were on welfare; a record amount of health care spending because of the job creation we've done.

1550

The SARS crisis, one of the unique crises to hit this city, was handled very well. Where are the federal Liberals, who should be at the table? I think that's the government the member opposite is talking about when he says, "The government is missing in action." He means the federal government is missing in action, where there's no strategy to help Ontarians, to help Toronto to fight SARS.

Of course the members opposite always have this fearmongering. Not too many weeks ago, not even a year ago, they talked about how bad the situation was going to be regarding the double cohort. Let me assure you, Mr Speaker, and through you the member opposite, that the so-called perception that there would not be enough spaces was a myth. There are going to be plenty of spaces. I've been talking to a lot of university kids or kids who will be going to university. They are getting their first, second or third choice. I'm so very pleased that the system that we forecast was going to work is working. I can assure you that we want to continue on this, The Road Ahead, our beautiful platform. There will be good times ahead for everybody, including the opposition.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I listened carefully to the member for Timmins-James Bay as he discussed the impact of electricity rates on various communities across northern Ontario.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): Tell us about Wawa.

Mr Brown: The member for Kingston and the Islands wants me to tell them about Wawa. I would tell you quite clearly that the people in Wawa have signed literally hundreds of cards, hundreds of names on petitions. There is to be another demonstration, I believe this Sunday, as they complain about an electricity policy that has increased rates by at least 40%, in some cases as much as 80%, and is putting many small businesses out of business. We've had three or four just in the last month that

had to shut down. We have Dubreuil Forest Products, as the member clearly mentioned, that has seen an increase in the price of producing their product. The electricity price is now roughly \$5 million a year versus what was \$2.5 million before this re-regulation of the hydro-electricity market.

I want to tell my constituents in that area that there is some hope, and the hope is in response to many of the petitions they've read in concerning rural and remote rate protection. The Minister of Energy has said, "We are ... continuing discussions with the company to look at broader mitigation measures that may be available to address the needs of commercial and industrial customers in the Algoma-Manitoulin area." He assures us that he's "treating this ... as a high priority." Well, the "high priority" is getting higher every day. People are losing their jobs, some are losing their businesses and some will soon lose their homes.

Mr Martin: The member for Timmins-James Bay makes the case for northern Ontario very effectively and passionately, and I certainly agree with him. I was there on Monday, when we visited those communities that are being attacked, that are hanging on by their fingernails, that are going to wither on the vine very soon if some action isn't taken.

We hear of promises from the government to look into this. Yesterday I asked the Premier a question about Wawa and hydroelectricity, inviting him up to the rally on Sunday, and his response was, "Yes, we're hearing. We understand." But alas, when we speak to the people in places like White River and Dubreuilville and Wawa, they say that the government is missing in action. They're not telling them that. They've been trying to get a meeting with the Minister of Energy for over a year now. He won't return their calls. He won't respond to their letters. He won't meet with them. Mr Brown, their member, had them down here not so long ago for a meeting with officials. Did the minister show up to that meeting? No, he didn't show up. It's suggested that he was just down the hall in his own office. He could have at least popped in, and didn't.

This community, northern Ontario, a community in itself, deserves better. They deserve that this government live up to its responsibility, live up to the role it was given when it became government, and in these difficult economic times, with the perfect storm now overhead, to come up and meet.

Last Thursday in Manitouwadge, the reeves and mayors of the area of north Algoma had a meeting. They suggested an interministerial task force be formed, that all of the ministries get together: the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, the Ministry of Natural Resources, the ministry of economic development, and the Premier's office. Come on up. Sit around a table. Talk with folks. There are answers. We know there are answers.

The member for Timmins-James Bay spoke of the response of our government from 1990 to 1995 to some very difficult challenges, that we were there, giving

leadership, being a partner and providing resources so that those industries could be turned around. It can be done again. Where there's a will, there's a way.

These communities have a lot of talent, a lot of energy and a lot of passion for this. They love their communities. They want them to survive. They will sit down with government, and together we can all come up with answers.

What is there in this bill that we're debating today that will give any relief? Absolutely nothing.

Mr Guzzo: I want to say it's always a pleasure to listen to the member from Timmins-James Bay in this House. I mean that sincerely. He brings a very, very serious point of view here. I am one who accepts what he says with regard to the communities that he represents, and indeed his friend across the way.

But I find it very interesting. I listened with interest to what he said about what the government that he was part of did for these communities. They responded to them in a manner which they felt was appropriate, subsidizing with taxpayers' money businesses that were not competitive for the sake of the jobs in the communities, with the very important reliance in the communities on those jobs to keep those places healthy, financially and otherwise.

On Saturday night on television, I listened again to his leader who was the Premier of the province at the time you carried it out. I was fascinated to hear what he was saying and the advice that he was giving this government. He was belittling this government for subsidizing hydro rates, something that you did in your government with pride, that the Liberals under Mr Peterson did, and that we continued to do under Mr Harris when we took over in 1995. But he says it's ludicrous to continue to do it now in a world economy. He says it's foolhardy and it's going to be very difficult to face reality at a point in time when we have to come to grips with the issue.

As the minister has said and as this bill indicates, we need to find and encourage new supplies. It's the supply side that is killing us.

To have the change in pace that I'm experiencing today from the member from James Bay is astonishing, and I think he should apologize.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Timmins-James Bay has two minutes to respond.

Mr Bisson: First of all, I want to thank the members from Algoma and Sault Ste Marie for commenting on my presentation.

To the member from Ottawa West, no, I'm not going to apologize; quite frankly, the opposite. You're arguing that somehow subsidizing an industry is a bad thing, but you're the guys who are subsidizing hydro and you see that as a good thing. I think that was an odd argument.

The point being that when we restructured Kapuskasing, Sturgeon Falls, Algoma Steel, St Marys Paper, Abitibi, and all others, it wasn't subsidies that we gave those companies. We didn't go to them and say, "We're going to subsidize you with taxpayers' money." Workers sat down and we facilitated a process where workers

renegotiated their collective agreements. They gave money in exchange for shares, as they did in Spruce Falls and Kapuskasing, where they said, "Yes, we're going to give some of our holiday time. We're going to give you whatever, in exchange for getting shares of the company." Later on, when the company made money, they were able to sell those shares and walk away with better than \$100,000 in share value of Tembec. We didn't give subsidies. It was restructuring.

We dealt with hydro issues, for example, at Spruce Falls. That was one of the big issues. Our government was there, and we didn't subsidize; we dealt with the issues.

To the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, who said that he didn't know what I was talking about and I didn't say much, well, tell that to the more than about 600 workers at Falconbridge who are about to lose their jobs this summer on a three-month layoff, or the 85 other workers who are going to be laid off permanently. Talk to the Smooth Rock Falls workers who were laid off for two weeks and are threatened with complete closure of the plant within a year. Talk to the workers in Cochrane who are being laid off and who are on temporary layoff now. Tell it to the workers at Tembec in Kirkland Lake who have been shut down altogether by your government. Tell the workers at Domtar in Sturgeon Falls who have lost their jobs entirely in that community that we're not talking about anything in this House. Tell the workers in Dubreuilville and White River. How dare you come into this House and say we shouldn't be raising these issues—

The Deputy Speaker: I just want to remind the members that it's out of order to carry on conversations across the floor. If you want to carry yourself across and have a polite conversation, that might be quite permissible. Other than that, I'll use the authority you've given me to enforce the rules that you've decided you want.

1600

Hon Tina R. Molinari (Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I would like to take a few minutes to speak about Bill 23, the proposed Ontario Energy Board Consumer Protection and Governance Act, and specifically the enhanced communications mandate the proposed legislation has given to the Ontario Energy Board and the appointment of the OEB chair, the Honourable Howard Wetston, to carry out this mandate.

In preparing for today's session, it struck me just how vital energy is to this province. Business, industry and, most importantly, the people of this province all depend on reliable, affordable energy.

Last fall this government introduced our action plan to lower hydro bills. It lowered electricity prices for families, farms and small businesses. It put forward bold steps to encourage energy conservation and to foster the development of alternative energy.

Today we are here to discuss the next phase of the government's integrated energy strategy. Bill 23, the proposed Ontario Energy Board Consumer Protection

and Governance Act, provides further evidence of the commitment this government has to protecting consumers and businesses. This bill, if passed, is the culmination of a process that began last fall, when Premier Ernie Eves listened to people's concerns and ordered a review of the Ontario Energy Board.

Governments are judged on many things, but in the end they are often judged on two areas: how well they listen and how well they communicate with the public. I think this government has done an excellent job on both accounts. That is why I am proud to rise today to support the passage of Bill 23.

Bill 23 is the result of the government having listened to the people of this province. It will result in increased communication with the public on energy matters. If this bill is passed, it will ensure the people of Ontario will get the information they need to become informed energy consumers. This proposed legislation also puts into law a requirement that the Ontario Energy Board increase its communications mandate. This is an important step and one that will pay great dividends to the people of this province.

But before I speak about this enhanced communications role, I would first like to congratulate the Minister of Energy for the effort he put into the review of the Ontario Energy Board and the resulting—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Some would say, I guess, that I'm not speaking loudly enough when I say you can't carry on conversations and shout across the floor. I don't know that if I turned up the volume and shouted it out you would listen to me. But I'm telling you that I take absolutely no pleasure in asking somebody to leave this chamber, and I don't want to do it. So what am I supposed to do? Talk louder? Unless you hear me and you understand it, I'm sorry but it's going to be a short afternoon. I'm going to be here all afternoon, but somebody's not.

The Chair recognizes the Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, from Thornhill.

Hon Mrs Molinari: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, and thank you for taking a lead role in this House in making sure everyone is listening to some of the important information we have to share.

It's also an opportune time, as the Minister of Energy is here—I was in the process of congratulating the Minister of Energy for the effort he put into this review of the Ontario Energy Board and the resulting creation of Bill 23. He is a perfect example of a minister who cares and listens to the people of Ontario.

As the minister prepared Bill 23, he conducted an impressive consultation process. The consultation paper was posted on the ministry Web site. More than 1,500 letters were sent to MPPs, stakeholders, associations, consumer groups and municipalities. The minister received 78 written submissions, and he met personally with 25 different groups. He is also to be applauded for listening to the people of Ontario and making sure that

their concerns and their ideas were incorporated into this bill.

As this review was conducted, it became very clear that when it came to energy issues, the people of Ontario wanted more information. They said they wanted to make informed choices and didn't feel there was a place to find the information they needed. They wanted to know where there was a place they could turn to, someone who would be on their side. They wanted an agency that would listen to them and would help them when they needed it.

I'm proud to say that with this proposed legislation, Bill 23, the Ontario Energy Board Consumer Protection and Governance Act, this government has taken the important steps to make sure Ontario consumers can now turn to the energy board for their energy and information needs. This proposed legislation ensures that Ontario consumers will have the tools they need to manage their energy bills. Bill 23 ensures that the Ontario Energy Board will also have greater transparency. As part of this proposed bill, the OEB now has a responsibility to explain what they are doing and, most importantly, why they are doing it.

But we all know that it's people who make legislation succeed, and that's why I would like to again congratulate the Minister of Energy on his appointment of the Honourable Howard Wetston as chair of the Ontario Energy Board. Mr Wetston has extensive experience as an administrator, legal counsel and adjudicator in a wide range of organizations. It is my belief that the people of Ontario will soon see the positive impact he will have on the energy industry in this province. The new chair of the OEB has worked for the National Energy Board. He was also involved in the deregulation of the transportation industry in Canada. So clearly he understands many of the issues we face today. But even more impressive is that he has also worked for the Consumers' Association of Canada and was the commissioner of the Competition Bureau for the federal government. The Honourable Mr Wetston is a former federal judge and most recently vice-chairman of the Ontario Securities Commission.

But don't take my word for it. I'd like to quote from the Hansard record of the standing committee on government agencies, which recently reviewed Mr Wetston's appointment. A member of the official opposition, the member for St Paul's, noted, "We believe that the Honourable Mr Wetston is in fact very qualified and is best prepared to take on this challenge," while the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke noted that he too supported this appointment. He cited Mr Wetston's impressive experience. His comments: "I particularly like what he said about transparency, about consumer protection and about an honest and frank recognition of a very complex set of forces that are at play on an absolutely vital public interest."

But what impressed me the most with regard to the Hansard report was when Mr Wetston himself spoke, and he noted, "The legislation, if it's passed, requires the OEB to take on a higher role for the education of Ontario's consumers. I think that's really critical. One of

the first things I will try and do is really beef up our capacity to educate Ontario consumers about energy." He went on to say, "I learned that when I was general counsel to the consumers association ... we had to try and get government to be more transparent." Clearly we have the right person in place to make sure the spirit and intent of Bill 23, the proposed Ontario Energy Board Consumer Protection and Governance Act, is carried through.

1610

In the little time I have left, I would like to talk briefly about some of the other important aspects of Bill 23. This bill, if passed, is another key part of our plan to protect Ontario's energy consumers and to ensure an efficient and effective regulatory process is in place to meet the needs of our growing energy sector. This government met with the people and asked them what changes were needed at the Ontario Energy Board. We listened and acted on their concerns. The people told us that the Ontario Energy Board process needed streamlining. They said the decision-making process had to be improved and made faster.

We are a government that listens. Not only are we a government that listens, we are a government that acts on what we hear from the people of Ontario. In this, we listened and acted. The people told us that the Ontario Energy Board needed to improve its day-to-day operations. We listened and we acted. Our review told us that funding for the Ontario Energy Board should continue to come from the users, and this legislation, if passed, ensures that this happens. We were also told that for the Ontario Energy Board to be an effective regulator, it had to attract the best and brightest people in the industry. This proposed legislation allows us to do just that.

We have heard a lot in the process of the consultations, and the Minister of Energy, in his work throughout putting together this bill, consulted with various stakeholders and consulted with a large group of people. That is what this government is all about. In all of the legislation we put forth and the types of decisions that we as a government make are decisions based on the consultation process, based on what the people of Ontario are telling us that they want, what their priorities are, because any government of the day needs to listen to those they represent. This government is a government that in fact does listen.

There are several pieces of legislation this government has put forth that have been along the same lines of consultation, but the one we're talking about today is Bill 23. The title of the bill is An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Act, 1998 and the Municipal Franchises Act in respect of consumer protection, the governance of the Ontario Energy Board and other matters.

I talked about a number of things that came out, and things that we listened to and acted on. Through the consultations, we were also told that the Ontario Energy Board needed greater accountability. Accountability for this government is a key and very important factor. It's been seen in a number of other areas that we hold ourselves accountable to the people of Ontario. We hold

ourselves accountable to the decisions we make. We hold ourselves accountable to the consultation process that we've gone through. So accountability is a great factor for this government, and it was a great factor here. We listened to what we were told.

This legislation proposes the establishment of an advisory committee of stakeholders, industry representatives and independent members who will review the Ontario Energy Board's performance, a stakeholder group made up of a number of people who are industry representatives, people who are reflective of what we need to go to to get the advice we need. This is where the accountability factor comes in, and this is where we listen to the people of Ontario.

The Ontario Energy Board has an obligation and a duty to act in the best interests of consumers. It is my belief that if passed, Bill 23, the proposed Ontario Energy Board Consumer Protection and Governance Act, puts in place the legislation that we need to ensure that it has the mandate and resources needed to make this happen.

This government recognizes that in order to have legislation passed, in order for legislation to be successful, resources need to be invested in those areas. As a government, we are committed to investing the resources needed for legislation that we need to pass and make sure that the people of Ontario are well represented.

This legislation is very much the same as a number of other pieces of legislation that this government put through because it has the accountability and it has the resources backing the legislation that we put through.

This government also recognizes the importance of protecting consumers. We recognize that consumers had great concerns over the energy cost and energy prices in the province of Ontario. Our Premier took a leadership role in that. Our Premier listened to the people of Ontario; our Premier is one who is of a consultative nature. That is why the Minister of Energy went out and did a clear consultation, because that is the direction that we're getting from our Premier—a Premier who represents the people of Ontario. It's important not only that we protect consumers but it's also important that consumers feel that they are being protected by the decisions that this government is making.

This bill recognizes the importance of listening to the public and acting on their concerns. I'm very proud of the fact that this bill recognizes what we've heard from the people of Ontario. It accounts for all of the things that we've heard and all of the things that the Minister of Energy has heard in his consultation process. The Minister of Energy is a very energetic minister who is out there talking to all of the people and making sure that the legislation that he brings forth is legislation that is fair legislation and has accountability. It also shows the people that we actually listened.

In listening to the people, it was clear that changes were needed into the Ontario Energy Board. This bill is very reflective of that. Bill 23, when passed—if passed—makes those changes. This is not change for change's sake, because you can make changes and not improve

things. This is change that is needed and change that is necessary. This proposed legislation will make the Ontario Energy Board the effective regulator that this province needs.

I again want to talk about how important it is that everyone in this House recognize that this bill is a bill that was created by the people of Ontario because of all the consultation that was done. This is something that they told us they needed, and it's very reflective of that. Energy in the province of Ontario is vital. It's vital to our economy; it's vital to our future growth. It's one thing that all of the people of Ontario use. Every day, every hour, every minute, every week and every day, our consumers use energy. It's very important; it's one of the most important things in our priorities.

This proposed legislation, Bill 23, protects consumers and will help us meet our future energy needs. In the future, there will be a need for more energy. Our Minister of Energy has gone out and consulted on how we can have the energy that we need for the future of Ontario because, as we move forward in the next few months and the next few years, and especially with the summer coming and the heat coming, a lot of people will be turning on their air conditioners, and energy will be used much more so in the hot summer months. We as a government want to make sure that we have the energy we need for the future. It's something that I hear from my riding of Thornhill. My constituents are very concerned about the fact that the energy that we need in the future—will we have enough energy? Will we have the kind of energy that's environmentally safe? Will we be able to provide as much energy as all of the constituents of Thornhill, and for that matter all of the constituents in Ontario, need?

1620

I believe that this bill is reflective of what this government is all about. What this bill does is take into account everything that the Minister of Energy has heard, everything that the Premier of Ontario hears when he's out talking to people, and everything that I hear from the people of Thornhill. All of the MPPs, all of caucus have had an opportunity to have input into this bill. I know that the opposition has also had an opportunity to have input into this bill. I don't know if they took the opportunity for that, but they did have it, because in a consultation process, we consult with everyone in the province of Ontario, and everyone has the opportunity to improve any legislation that we put forth and put in front of this House. So I would encourage the members of the opposition to clearly read this legislation and see that it does reflect the people of Ontario and the consultation process that took place. I'm sure that in reading it clearly and understanding it, they will see that this legislation should be passed and supported. So I look forward to the full support of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Gerretsen: It may very well be that new consumer protection is required. I don't think anybody disagrees with that. We should have been discussing this

kind of a bill two years ago, before the market was opened up. That's when the people needed the protection.

It's kind of interesting. The real issue when it comes to electricity is the one that was identified by the member from Ottawa West, a member of the minister's own party. The real problem with respect to energy in the future is going to be: where is the extra, additional supply going to come from? That is the issue. You can talk about all the consumer protection legislation in the world, and certainly it's needed. People have to know what's happening in the energy market. But if you don't have enough supply, and if we have to import the energy from outside of Ontario and keep paying the kind of rates that we have been paying for the last year or so—which are much more than the 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour that we're charging the people of Ontario—then in effect the taxpayer or the ratepayer or somebody is going to have to pick up the difference. The difference right now is already at least \$600 million. If you include the start-up costs, we're talking about an extra \$2 billion that has been added on to the stranded debt of Ontario Hydro or to the debt of the power generation organization, whether it's in the one company or in the three different public companies that are out there right now.

So consumer protection is important. There is absolutely no question about it. But what are we doing about supply? That is the real issue. I'll be talking about that shortly when it will be my time to speak on this bill.

We can talk about consumer protection all we want, but if the supply isn't going to be there to satisfy the needs of the consumers of Ontario, we are going to end up paying much more than we're currently paying. That's the issue that I'd like this member to address.

Mr Martin: I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the speech by the member for Thornhill and to focus on perhaps one thing that she said, which is that this bill is somehow a reflection of voices out there in the province of Ontario that told the government what was needed so the government put it together in this bill.

I beg to differ. In fact, that is not what this bill is about. The bill is about further damage control. The government ran into a juggernaut when it took on this challenge of privatizing and deregulating hydro. They immediately went scurrying, as they always do, for scapegoats. They scapegoated Ontario Hydro and Eleanor Clitheroe. That wasn't good enough, so then they decided to scapegoat the Ontario Energy Board and Floyd Laughren.

No one and nothing in this province is safe from these guys if it's to their end, if it will benefit them as they perceive it. There are no sacred cows here. They're gone. They'll bring in a bill or do the smoke and mirrors required to coat over that and suggest that somehow they're going to improve the situation or the lot.

I'll tell you, if you really want to understand the energy history and situation in this province, I suggest you pick up Howard Hampton's book, *Public Power*, and have a read. It's a very excellent read. It's not an expensive book, and it's available out there now.

Mr Brown: How much is it?

Mr Martin: It's \$21.95. It's a bargain. It'll give you all that you need to know on public power, on power in Ontario.

Mr Brown: Who's the ghostwriter?

Mr Martin: Howard Hampton wrote it. Then if you want to know what we're going to do as a government once we get elected to solve the hydro challenge—

The Deputy Speaker: I'd like to remind the member that we don't use those kinds of props. There might be another venue somewhere in another building or something where you could do those kinds of commercials. Comments and questions?

Hon Doug Galt (Minister without Portfolio): I'm very pleased to respond to the member from Thornhill. What an excellent speech the member made.

Mr Gerretsen: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Today on at least three occasions the Speaker of this House has indicated to the government members not to hold up their dead-end book called *The Road Ahead*. This member did it again, and I would ask you to tell him not to use any props.

The Deputy Speaker: It's definitely a point of order. I did not see it. I think I would have recognized it. The Chair recognizes the member for Northumberland.

Hon Mr Galt: Unfortunately, I lost the first minute of my two-minute response. I wanted to compliment the member from Thornhill on just an exceptional speech, as usual. What else would you expect from a Conservative, especially the member from Thornhill? Just a marvellous, marvellous job.

This bill is about protecting the energy consumers of the province of Ontario. It's certainly something the Liberals obviously didn't do when they were in office; the NDP certainly didn't. They were buying some rain forest, as I remember, and that was to protect the consumers? I don't think so. They let the debt take off to over \$30 billion—closer to \$40 billion was the debt of Ontario Hydro. That was not the way to protect the Ontario power consumers.

This bill is going to give more say to consumers in matters of energy, and I'm certainly pretty proud of our government and the select committee on alternate fuels for coming in with that kind of report. As a matter of fact, it was a unanimously accepted report by all parties. I'm sure the consumers we'll be protecting with this bill are in fact very pleased with that select committee's recommendations that are out there at this time.

I again congratulate the member from Thornhill for just a tremendous speech.

Mr Brown: I was very much interested in what the member for Thornhill had to say, and I think the member for Kingston and the Islands probably put it best when he said that the real problem here is with supply. No significant supply in this province has come on-line since the New Democratic Party finished Darlington. When they finished Darlington, we put 4,000 megawatts of supply into the grid. Since then, there has been really no significant new supply.

We are facing a situation in Ontario where we are told that within the next 10 years or so we need to build 10,000 to 15,000 new megawatts of electricity. No amount of consumer regulation, no amount of government intervention, can change the fact that we need supply or we will never be able to protect consumers, we will never be able to have a strong economy, we will never be able to continue to build this province that, for many years, generated much of its economic activity through its very low-cost, reliable electricity policy.

I would take members back to 1990, when there was a plan, a 25-year plan, for public electricity to be built. It had been going through the environmental process. That public power plan back in 1990 proposed a number of alternatives for new generation. With the coming of a new government in 1990, that public power plan for new generation in this province was killed. And at that point there was no plan for public power in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: The Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has two minutes to respond.

1630

Hon Mrs Molinari: I'm happy to hear some of the comments from my colleagues: the member for Kingston and the Islands, the member for Sault Ste Marie, also my most esteemed colleague, the member for Northumberland, who is also the government whip and does an excellent job at that as well, and the member for Algoma-Manitoulin.

I want to again stress that this bill is a bill of accountability and is one that provided for the minister to engage in a consultation process, and this bill was created in that consultation process. I also want to highlight the fact that this government took action when energy prices were rising. Our Premier made a statement that they were frozen at 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour because that is what the consumers were requesting, that the government take a stand on this.

I want to read into the record support of our nominee, the Honourable Mr Wetston. I also have a quote from Mr Conway, who is a Liberal member: "I want to just very briefly recommend to the committee the concurrence in support of this nominee, who obviously comes to this responsibility with a very, very powerful and, I think, impressive resumé. I was particularly struck by his testimony here today. It is, as my friend Bryant says, not going to be an easy job."

So there are a number of people around this House, and also on the opposition side, who do support the Honourable Mr Wetston in this appointment.

For the record, I have to also state that the NDP voted against this. It's important that everyone recognize the importance of this bill and that it goes through. I would encourage the members to really clearly think of Ontarians when they're voting on this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Gerretsen: For the record, this is not about the Honourable Howard Wetston. I understand the gentleman comes highly recommended and I certainly wish him

well in his job. I would also suggest to all those people who may have an interest in this topic to read the Hansard of the speech Mr Conway gave last night. It was a long speech, but during that speech he gave the history of hydroelectric power in this province over the last 100 years, all of the ramifications that has had and all of the various issues that have arisen over that period of time. It was an excellent speech by a member who, quite frankly, knows a lot more about this situation than I do.

I'm not going to blast the government on the issue of providing greater consumer protection in the energy field. The question that I have, and I indicated it to you a bit earlier, Speaker, is, why wasn't this kind of a bill before us at least two years ago, before the market was opened up and before we had all the chaos and havoc that erupted in the electricity market? That's when we should have dealt with this bill. I'm also not going to deal with whether or not the board that is being created under this bill is better or worse than the existing Ontario Energy Board. I have high respect for Mr Laughren, who ran that board for a certain period of time. I certainly wish this new operation well because the consumers in Ontario need to be protected.

But the principal issue—before dealing with the principal issue, I think it's rather ironic that just on the day when we are discussing this bill, a consumer advisory has been issued by the Ontario Energy Board. You may recall that the member for St Paul's asked the Minister of Energy about this earlier today in question period. I want to take the time, because I do have some time, to read this entire advisory that was issued by the Ontario Energy Board today. It just shows you that the consumer protection that we're talking about in this bill, presumably, or the consumer protection people might think is out there for them when it comes to energy contracts, isn't there at all at this stage. I will read this verbatim, so it's not my propaganda, it's not the government's propaganda; it is the word of the Ontario Energy Board as it exists today. This is an advisory dated June 18. It states as follows:

"The Ontario Energy Board is advising consumers of recent changes to the energy contract renewal process. Under new regulations passed by the Ontario government," by the cabinet sitting right there, "natural gas and electricity supply contracts can be automatically renewed for one year. Energy marketers are required to send customers a detailed renewal package including the new term and price of the renewed contract. Consumers have 30 days to cancel, in writing, after receiving the renewal notice. Consumers may also cancel within 35 days of being sent their first bill after the renewed contract takes effect." But here comes the magic word. "If the consumer does not respond to the renewal notice," in other words, if you don't do anything, "and does not cancel after receiving the first bill, the contract is renewed for one year.

"The new renewal process applies to both natural gas and electricity supply contracts."

This is a negative option billing situation. I'll go on and read the next paragraph:

"The board wants to remind consumers who sign or renew electricity supply contracts that they will pay the contract price," in other words, the price that's in the renewal notice, "and will no longer be eligible"—and this is the crucial point—"for the electricity supply price freeze," in other words, the 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour that everybody has been guaranteed until the year 2006. If you sign one of these contracts, then you're no longer entitled to that. That's what this says.

"Presently, consumers who qualify for the government electricity price freeze pay a rate of 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour. This commodity price is in effect to May 2006. Electricity retailers are required to inform consumers of both the contract rate and the 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour rate an eligible customer would pay without a contract. If a consumer signs a new electricity supply contract or renews an existing contract, the consumer will pay the contract price." This may be higher; I suppose it may be lower than 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour, but not very likely.

"If a consumer fails to respond to an electricity supply contract renewal notice and does not cancel after receiving the first bill under the renewed contract, the consumer will pay the contract price."

We have heard so much in this House. Remember when we talked about the cable television rates and how we were just totally surprised and amazed and how we were against the negative billing option that was provided with the cable rates? Apparently the cabinet sees absolutely nothing wrong with it. They are the people who passed this regulation. But if you don't do anything about it, the new rate will apply.

It does go on to say—this is from the Ontario Energy Board—"Consumers are advised to carefully consider all offers for electricity or natural gas supply to ensure they know the terms and conditions of the contract."

All I'm saying is that you can talk about all the consumer protection legislation in the world, but this cabinet has allowed the dealers as of today to still be involved in negative option billing, as far as the individual consumers of electricity and natural gas out there are concerned. I think that is just contemptible. It really and truly is. On the one hand, we're talking about consumer protection, and on the other hand, the kind of regulation that the cabinet has passed is the classic example of a negative option billing. So, government, don't talk about wanting to protect the consumer. You may couch it in certain terminology, and you may even make good speeches about it, but in actual fact you're doing exactly the opposite in regulations you are passing even as we speak today.

1640

As I indicated before in my couple of minutes of response to the Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs, I truly believe that what we're really dealing with is the question of supply. Where are we going to get the supply for the future electricity needs of this province? As has been indicated before, we will need, in the not-too-distant

future, an extra 10,000 to 15,000 megawatts of electricity in this province, with the expansion that is taking place, with the new people that are coming, with the new businesses they're opening up.

What are we doing to replace and increase that electrical power situation? Are we talking to Manitoba? I had a recent conversation, just by pure coincidence, with the finance minister of Manitoba. He indicated to me that they were very much interested in starting a project on Churchill Falls. I believe this was talked about eight or 10 years ago as well, when we had the NDP government in power in Ontario, and they killed all the talks about getting into an agreement with the province of Manitoba.

There may be problems involved with that. Maybe because the greatest electricity needs we have are here in southwestern and central Ontario, it may be too large a distance to bring the energy from Churchill Falls in Manitoba; I really don't know. But are there any ongoing discussions right now with Manitoba so we could get into agreements with them?

What kind of discussions are taking place with Hydro-Québec? Hydro-Québec is selling to the United States. Why aren't we involved in that? We've seen what's happened just within the last year: the cost to the consumer, the taxpayer of this province, of a minimum of \$600 million in order to basically subsidize the guaranteed price of 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour.

I know that the members opposite in the government will say, "The Liberals voted for this." Yes, we voted for this. It was kind of voting for the lesser of two evils. Not to do anything at that point in time would have allowed the absolute chaos that existed a year or so ago, you may recall, when electricity rates were all over the place and people were paying all sorts of different prices. It was either to allow that to go on or to at least put some sort of stability in existence for the consumer of Ontario.

Is it the solution? It sure isn't the solution as far as I'm concerned and as far as our party is concerned. We've already said to the people of Ontario that if we should be fortunate enough to form the next government, that is one of the very first issues that will have to be addressed.

We cannot go on depending on external sources of energy, sometimes 25% up to 30% of our power needs in the province, buying it offshore from the States or wherever without having firm contracts in place. That's why we need to talk to our Canadian partners, to other provinces, about this situation. And this is just being added to the debt right now.

I happen to be one of those individuals who do not blame the stranded debt of some \$20 billion that has occurred in Ontario entirely on Ontario Hydro. I take the position, as I've stated in this House before, that over the last 100 years—and I guess it's been exactly 100 years since hydro power first came to this province—the price we charge consumers, both large and small, for electricity in the province has been part of the economic development of this province. It was always advantageous to us as Ontarians, as citizens of this province, to charge below the cost of electricity. The reason for that is

that we wanted to build the plants and we wanted to supply the jobs etc that come along with that. All governments of whatever political stripe over the last 100 years have basically used cheap electricity costs as a method of attracting business to this province.

So I don't blame the entire \$20-billion stranded debt that Ontario Hydro incurred over the last 100 years on the mismanagement of Ontario Hydro or to their being fat cats. There may have been some element of that, and quite frankly, I personally don't know about that. But something has to be done about that debt. It is no different than the public debt we have in this province, which now stands at about \$115 billion, whereas eight or nine years ago it was in the neighbourhood of \$90 billion. We're just adding to the public debt. By, in effect, guaranteeing people a rate of 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour, we are going to add, if not to that debt, at least to the stranded debt of Ontario Hydro. In the long run, that is wrong.

What we have always said is that we do not want to sell parts of Ontario Hydro, of either Hydro One or OPG. We will, however, allow private companies to come into Ontario and help the province build the supply that's needed to deal with the future. I don't care whether that additional supply comes from a government source, which I would prefer, or from a private source. But as the member from Renfrew North, Mr Conway, indicated yesterday, I think people have to understand that all the new sources of energy that are out there are going to cost more, with the exception of hydroelectric energy, which can be produced, I understand, at a very reasonable cost once the infrastructure is in place. I understand that wind power is going to come in at something like nine or 10 cents a kilowatt hour. When the consumer is only paying 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour right now for electricity needs in the province, not too many people, in my opinion, except those who are really environmentally conscious, are going to buy into that. Certainly, nuclear costs would be even more than that.

What are some of the other costs that have been incurred? The point I'm simply trying to make is that wherever the new electric power comes from, whether it's privately or publicly generated, there should be the ultimate control of government over that. There is no question in my mind that the electricity utility we all need, as has been pointed out by every member in this House, has to be publicly controlled. As far as I am concerned, I prefer it to be owned by the public as well. But there's going to be a cost involved in that. Whether or not we make a deal with Quebec or Manitoba, or whether or not private entrepreneurs are going to produce this power through wind or various other sources, it's going to cost more than what we are paying right now.

That's why I think energy conservation programs are so important. I still think we can do a lot in that. It always bothered me that when I was on the utilities commission in Kingston back in the 1980s, we wanted people to conserve at the same time as we were selling electric power to the larger consumers at a much cheaper rate

than the average homeowner was paying. You may recall that, generally speaking, the policy in the 1970s and 1980s, and perhaps before that as well, seemed to be that the more electricity you used, the cheaper it got. If you keep doing that, people aren't going to conserve.

If there's one thing that is absolutely clear about the energy policy of this government, it's that it has been totally and absolutely mishandled. I could not believe that the province of Ontario, through one of its hydro companies or whatever, has now been placed in a position where we have to rent in effect—what do you call it?—generators to make sure that we don't have brown-outs this summer, and that these generators are placed in some of our municipalities to make sure that if something happens, we can—to me it almost sounded like something out of the Third World, the lack of planning and the lack of foresight.

1650

Perhaps the blame shouldn't go to only this government, because there's enough to go around to governments over the last 10, 15, 20 years. I don't care where the blame lies, quite frankly, but the fact that we've got to—oh, and the member's pointing to us here. Well, if it makes you feel better, point to us. We were only in power for five years, by the way. The Liberals under Peterson get blamed for so many things, but unfortunately for that particular government they were only around for five years.

It always reminds me of the total debt of this province. The government members love to say that the debt of this province was incurred by the Peterson Liberals. Well, if you look at the records during that period of time, the public debt of this province went up by only about \$8 billion. During the NDP years, it went up at a rate of about \$10 billion per year for five years. So that's \$58 billion. The other \$60 billion was all incurred on your watch.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The members for Bramalea, Ottawa, Kitchener and Oxford, I'll not warn you again.

The Chair recognizes the member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr Gerretsen: Thank you very much, Speaker. Unfortunately, what happens at moments like that of course is that you sometimes lose your train of thought, but I haven't quite lost it yet. I know that by far most of the public debt that is incurred by this province, whether it's in stranded debt of Ontario Hydro or whether it's public debt, has been incurred on your watch, and substantially on the NDP's watch as well, because unfortunately we weren't in power long enough, I suppose, to add substantially to that debt.

We have got a major problem here, and consumer protection is important. But what is even more important is that the issue of supply is dealt with by whoever forms the next government as its top, number one priority.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Bisson: I think the priority of the next government is going to be trying to put the genie back in the bottle. What we've got here is a government that basically went in with zeal to try to change Ontario Hydro to their way of seeing things, which was to deregulate, open the market and try to privatize it. Clearly it hasn't worked. Hydro rates, as I said earlier today—a 75% increase in the hydro rates in Dubreuilville, one of the key issues in why that company is laying off 285 workers. You take a look at companies like Falconbridge, down for three months in the city of Timmins this year. Why? Because last year, under market opening, they were constantly being called by Ontario Hydro, who was saying, "You're paying a through price on power." The through price on power? Once hydro supply went down because of additional usage in the summer, the hydro rates went through the roof. As a result, now we've got Falconbridge in Timmins laying off workers there in part of their operations for a period of three months, and they've just announced 85 permanent layoffs at Falconbridge. They are saying one of the key reasons for that is hydro.

So I think one of the key things the government is going to have to do in the next Parliament is, quite frankly—and it's going to be a tough job—to put the genie back in the bottle.

As a New Democrat, I disagree with where the government is going, but I also disagree with what the Liberals are saying, because they're trying to play it both ways. They're trying to say, "We believe in public power, but we believe there's a role for the private sector in the generation of electricity." That can be a whole other debate. I don't buy that argument. If you're going to be able to control prices for electricity, you have to have a system that is totally publicly owned and run. Why does it work? We can get into a whole debate about that, but the end result is this. If you look at Manitoba and Quebec, they are the two jurisdictions with the lowest price of power across North America. They're both public. It's not a hybrid system, it's not a mixture of private and public; it's a public system. That's what we need to do.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, Government House Leader): I'd say to my friend from the New Democratic Party, remember with Quebec and Manitoba that they're also almost entirely hydro generation. In the province of Ontario we don't have ready access to a Churchill Falls. We don't have ready access, at this stage, to northern Manitoba. We do have about 30% of our power from hydro, but 70% of it's not from hydro. So he'd want to remember that.

I listened with great interest to the speech by my colleague from Kingston and the Islands. I want to be clear about something to set the facts straight. I know this member does his homework and he's probably listened to one of his colleagues, but I'll ensure that he gets the facts. We provided the stability of a 4.3-cent fixed rate. I appreciated the member opposite and the member from Prescott-Russell voting for that bill in the House. The

contract renewals, which is the issue he raised, are for residents. Nothing in the change on the regulatory side will lose them the 4.3-cent cap. They would have to be sent a renewal notice to which they would respond. There are no renewal notices going out because the retailers of course aren't in the residential business of providing contracts for electricity. Because the 4.3-cent—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Baird: If the member opposite can show me a renewal notice, someone this has actually happened to—because it ain't happening and I can guarantee that it won't happen. That's very important, and I wanted to straighten that record before any misconceptions go out there.

We do want to provide a default option. There has to be something that happens. The customer would have to be cut off natural gas and, later, electricity. They would either be thrown back on the volatile price market or they would have to have the opportunity to stay on the fixed rate. All we were simply saying is that someone who had chosen to leave the volatile spot market would have the opportunity to go on a fixed rate with double the time renewal period. No renewal notices are being sent out. I know that will be good news to the people in the city of Kingston.

The Deputy Speaker: I just want to remind you, I have no problem with the conversation going on out to my left. It's the volume. Turn the volume down or goodbye.

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): I commend the member for Kingston and the Islands. He referred to the concerns that have occurred ever since we went with deregulation. This bill will not address those concerns.

At the present time, he really touched on the seniors. Those renewal contracts, it is there at the present time on any of those contracts that were signed. It is in the fine print. In Ontario at the present time, we have over one and a half million seniors, of 65s and over. A good majority of them will receive those renewal contracts and do not have the facilities to answer those letters that they'll be getting to renew contracts. It should be done automatically: "If you have not answered within 30 days, your contract is cancelled. You could reapply again."

Mind you, the night of November 11, people were still knocking on doors selling contracts at 6.7 cents a kilowatt hour. They happened to be at my place. You can rest assured, they got quite an answer because somebody had forged my signature in the past. The minister told me just lately that anybody who wants to sign a new contract at 7.1 cents per kilowatt hour—and this is offered and available from Direct Energy. If you don't give them a call or send a letter that you are cancelling your contract, automatically you'll be stuck with this new rate, which could vary. At the present time, if it is 7.1 cents, people will be paying 7.1 cents per kilowatt hour, and this is unfair.

I hope that somebody will appeal immediately. Floyd Laughren is not there any more, but I hope the people will observe that.

Mr Martin: The member for Kingston and the Islands certainly put out a very clear position on the challenge that's confronting the province on some of what needs to be done and where his party stands. I suggest to you that the government is trying to coat over a very difficult hornet's nest that they've whacked in the last couple of years. First they scapegoated Ontario Hydro and Eleanor Clitheroe and threw them overboard. Then they scapegoated the Ontario Energy Board and Floyd Laughren and threw them overboard. Now they're bringing in this bill that they would have us believe is going to resolve everything.

1700

I would suggest to you that if it's the electricity market and the delivery of electricity—the supply of electricity and a reliable, cost-effective source of electricity—you're talking about, then you don't have to go much further than the platform that we as a party are putting forward come this election. Howard Hampton and the NDP's practical solution for affordable, reliable hydro is very simple:

"Keep hydro in public hands; immediately end hydro privatization and deregulation. Create Efficiency Ontario to take the lead on money-saving, environmentally friendly, energy efficiency measures so that people can save money through using less hydro, less gas and less heating oil. Guarantee by law that by the year 2010 at least 10% and by the year 2020 at least 20% of our electricity would be produced from renewable environmentally friendly sources. Ensure public accountability in our public power system through our new Public Utilities Commission. Place a moratorium on new nuclear power stations, clean our air by closing or converting Ontario's coal-fired generating stations by 2007 and invest in clean and renewable energy generation to ensure reliable electricity at cost for Ontario consumers."

What would the Liberals do? We're not quite sure. One day they say they would privatize; the next day they say they won't. We've yet to know that.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. The member for Kingston and the Islands has two minutes to reply.

Mr Gerretsen: I'd like to thank all the members for their comments. As the minister indicated to me in an aside while the comments were going on, apparently this consumer advisory doesn't apply to electricity supply contracts. All I can say is that this Ontario Energy Board notice clearly states that it does. It is a negative billing option and it shouldn't exist. If it doesn't apply, please send out a notice that it doesn't apply so that a whole bunch of people out there who may be watching this or who may have somehow got a copy of this notice are not going to be affected by it, because that's what it's really all about.

You know, electricity is not about parties; it's not about governments and oppositions. It's about the consumers out there. That's what it's all about, and that's

what the legislation should be all about: protecting the consumers. The best way to protect the consumers out there is to make sure there's an adequate supply of electricity out there. Right now, that isn't happening.

If you talk about mismanagement of a file by the government, then certainly this is it. What's happened at Pickering? Pickering so far is \$1.2 billion over budget—\$1.2 billion. The cost was originally supposed to be \$800 million for the upgrades. I understand that it's getting close to \$2.5 billion and rising. Some 4,600 megawatts were taken out of commission in 1997 and were supposed to be reinstalled by 2000. What's happening in 2003? It's still not on-line. You know, we can make all sorts of political comments about it, but those are the facts. As a result, the consumer in Ontario is going to be paying more. They can either be paying more now or they can be paying more later on, when it's added on to the debt of Ontario Hydro.

Right now, this government is certainly not looking after the consumer as far as the electricity rates and the availability of electricity in this province are concerned.

The Deputy Speaker: We've consumed seven hours of debate. We'll now convert to 10-minute debate times. In rotation, I'm looking to my right to the PC caucus.

Mr Gill: I do appreciate you looking to your right, because on the right you will find the right party, the right platform—The Road Ahead—and everything about the progress needed in the province of Ontario.

Hon Mr Baird: Is that it?

Mr Gill: Yes, that is The Road Ahead. Of course my esteemed member from Ottawa is now browsing through. He has mastered it all, I'm sure, and he will be discussing that with his constituents.

This afternoon, I think those at home should know that we are discussing the Ontario Energy Board Consumer Protection and Governance Act. This bill, Bill 23, is what we are discussing. Considerable debate has gone on; as you mentioned just a few minutes ago, seven hours of it. I am pleased to speak on this issue, because it is an issue of importance to Ontarians. Electricity is widely needed as we grow; as the economy grows, so much more electricity is needed.

I'm very pleased that the company out of Oswego, New York, called Sithe Energy is planning to build, I believe, an 800-megawatt power generation plant using clean natural gas in my great riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale at an investment—I wouldn't use the word "cost"—of \$1 billion. It's quite an investment for Ontario and for the people of Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale. When it is completed, it guarantees as well as ensures that the electricity is available for the growing marketplace.

When I speak for the next few minutes, I believe I speak also for all members of the assembly when I say that energy is among the top concerns of our constituents, along with, of course, health care, education, an education tax credit for seniors, mortgage interest deductibility, no teachers' strikes. There are issues to be dealt with, and I do want to assure the people listening at home that this

is a government that has the fortitude and the willingness to make the tough decisions to bring forward the continued growth that this province not only needs but deserves.

Whether it be through my riding office, your riding office or conversations we've had with people as we meet people across the province, it is clear that energy prices, energy supply and energy regulation are on the minds of the people of Ontario, along with the other issues I have mentioned. That is why this legislation, Bill 23, the proposed Ontario Energy Board Consumer Protection and Governance Act, 2003, is so important. The people of this province need to know that there's a place they can turn to that will help them make informed energy choices. They need to know there's an agency that is watching out for their interests. They need to know there's a place they can turn to that will act on their behalf if they have a problem they can't solve on their own.

The Ontario Energy Board is that place, and this legislation, if passed, will greatly enhance the board's ability to protect consumers. I know the member from Kingston and the Islands said just a few minutes ago, "It is about consumers." I agree: it is about consumers. That's why this bill, if passed, will make sure that the consumers are protected and are informed to make the right decisions, the right choices.

The OEB was established more than 40 years ago. It is run by talented, dedicated people. But last year it became clear that changes were needed, changes had to be made. The Reliable Energy and Consumer Protection Act, 2002, went a long way to making some of the needed changes. That legislation enhanced the protection of consumers by including reforms to strengthen the OEB's powers to take action against unfair marketing and retailing practices. The act also increased the OEB's enforcement powers and strengthened the surveillance powers of the Independent Electricity Market Operator's Market Surveillance Panel.

But through this last summer and fall, it became clear that more had to be done. You do hopefully remember last summer. We Canadians have short memories. I hope we all remember what a great summer we had, but it was record temperatures. That's what summers are supposed to be about. I'm looking forward to another good summer, but it will put challenges, it will put constraints, on electricity supply, and we have to be watchful. We have to consume electricity. I think in Canada we have sometimes become not only users of electricity but users of other consumer goods in terms of abundance, and sometimes we tend to overdo it.

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In one way, I'm not pleased that the electricity prices went up, but this has certainly opened people's minds about conserving electricity. I was as much to blame as anybody, because when I came home I talked to the kids, talked to my spouse for whatever little time I had, and said, "How come the lights are not on? Put all the lights on. The house should be lived in. People should know

people are living here.” Now, I’m converted. I’ve changed. When I come home the first thing I say is, “How come all the lights are on? Put the lights off. Put the TV down,” as if it’s going to save any energy. I don’t know. But I said, “Put the sound down.”

We need to conserve more. If we all conserved just 5% or 10% of what we’re using now, I’m sure we will have all the electricity we need for the next little while.

My colleague the Minister of Energy, the honourable minister from Ottawa, has proposed legislation which is the result of a lot of hard work. The minister works extremely hard.

It included an impressive consultation process. We are the government that does consult. We’ve seen that in examples like STO. I must explain STO: seizing tomorrow’s opportunities. We went out and talked to people all across Ontario at different venues, asking people what sort of Ontario they would like to see in the next five, 10, 15 years.

Those are the sort of consultations that went into the platform, the next agenda that we’re proposing, which includes, as I said earlier, mortgage interest deductibility, a seniors’ tax credit, an education equity tax credit, more doctors and nurses, and no teachers’ strikes, or at least no teachers’ strikes during the school year. That’s fair. During the school year, it doesn’t affect the kids. They can still do the strike, but I suppose they’ll have to do it in their spare time in the summer. Also, we consulted on the budget and we consulted on the platform, *The Road Ahead*, as I said earlier.

This consultation was very important. It meant that this was not change for the sake of change. The consultation process meant that the people, associations and companies who use the OEB had a key role in the changes outlined in this bill. This proposed legislation gives the OEB new purpose and will make it a much stronger organization. Bill 23, if passed, creates a strong, independent and well-resourced Ontario Energy Board, an OEB that can make the decisions that ensure that the people of this province are treated fairly.

It’s all about fairness. It’s all about consumers. I’m hoping that by the end of the day today this House will pass this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Don Valley East on a point of order.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Oh, I’m sorry. If you’re standing up and talking, I think I should be giving you the floor on the subject.

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): I’m just setting up my rotation.

The Deputy Speaker: I’d ask you to do it in a different manner so it doesn’t confuse me.

Comments and questions? Are you on a point of order or do you want your rotation—

Mr Bisson: I didn’t know if anybody is up yet.

The Deputy Speaker: I’m going to put you into your own turn in two minutes.

The Chair recognizes the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell.

Mr Lalonde: The member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale remarked in his speech that this bill will protect the consumers. Let me tell you that if we really want to protect the consumers, I just hope that this new board would listen to the city of Ottawa or Ottawa Hydro. At the present time, Ottawa Hydro is ready to service the rural area. There are over 37,000 customers serviced by Hydro One. Hydro One at the present time, even though the minister was saying that Ottawa Hydro had a surcharge, let me tell you that the residential normal density is 37,000 rural people serviced by Hydro One. If those people were with the city of Ottawa, the fixed charge would have been \$6.69. With Hydro One, it is costing them \$23.70, nearly \$17 difference per month. This represents over \$10 million a year within the Cumberland area, which amounts to a little over 37,000 customers.

So I just hope that this new board is willing to listen to the people in Ottawa. They are ready to pay the reasonable price to take over. I was saying last night that Embrun Co-op Hydro finally won their case. It’s too bad that we have a new board, and I just hope that this new board will take the time and listen to Ottawa Hydro so everybody will benefit from the same cost for hydro services.

Mr Bisson: I enjoyed the comments of my friend from Bramalea-Gore-Malton—I think I got that right.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: OK. I enjoyed his comments, and I especially enjoyed his little comment at the beginning of his discourse, where you said, “I will recognize the party on my right,” and he responded by saying, “You’re responding to the right party with the right choice and the right plan.” I’ve got to refute that. We know you guys are on the political right. That we understand. I think that’s the only thing—

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: Well, the Liberals do—sometimes mostly to the right. But I would argue you’re actually on the wrong side of this particular issue, not on the right side of hydro.

So I’m just going to put it simply again. As I said, there are communities across northern Ontario, as we’re starting to see with communities in the south, that are starting to be affected by what’s happening in the economy. One of the key factors in the layoffs that we’re seeing up north and the temporary plant closures is basically around the issue of energy. I just ask you to contemplate what has changed over the last 12 or 14 months when it comes to energy in the province of Ontario, which causes companies like River Gold Mines, Falconbridge, Tembec in Smooth Rock Falls, in Cochrane and in Kirkland Lake, Buchanan in White River—

Interjection: It’s Domtar in White River.

Mr Bisson: —it’s Domtar in White River, sorry—and others to close down. When we sit down and talk to

them, they say that one of the key factors is energy. Where they used to pay a certain price for power last year, they're paying up to 75% more for electricity this year. Talk to the people at Dubreuilville. The manager there will tell you directly. They've said, "One of the reasons we're shutting down—key point; point final—is that a 75% increase in electricity has made us uncompetitive. Yes, we have countervailing duty problems and yes, we have an American dollar problem, but what has really put us over the hump is the electricity issue."

So I would argue that you may be politically to the right and you may be to the right side of the Speaker, but you're wrong when it comes to your policies on hydro.

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The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions? The Chair recognizes the Minister of Energy and House leader.

Hon Mr Baird: And minister of francophone affairs.

C'est bien sûr un plaisir pour moi de parler dans ce discours et de remercier mon cher collègue le député de Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale.

J'ai commencé de bien connaître le député dans ses premiers quatre ans dans l'Assemblée législative. Je suis sûr, comme l'on a vu pendant sa présentation, qu'il a fait beaucoup de travail dans le domaine de l'énergie. Mon premier jour comme ministre de l'Énergie, M. Gill m'a parlé de quelque chose qui était près de son cœur, qui était la construction d'une nouvelle station de génération dans sa région, parce qu'il savait que le gouvernement a pris la décision de fermer la station de génération de Lakeview. Le député de Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale a travaillé très fort pour être sûr qu'il y aurait un nouveau projet dans son comté. Il continue de me parler chaque jour sur cette politique très importante.

I did enjoy the member's speech. He, like me, believes we have to provide balanced regulation to provide a fair mix between the legitimate need of a consumer for protection and a fair return for investment, whether that be a pension fund or an investor. I thought the member opposite made an excellent speech, and I'm sure the people of his constituency know how lucky they are to have such a hard-working member for them in this place.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I appreciate the opportunity to talk about Bill 23, the Ontario Energy Board Consumer Protection and Governance Act, 2003. The member who gave the speech we're giving our two minutes on, the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale—I wanted to make sure I didn't say Springfield—made reference to a few things I just have to respond to that were actually outside of Bill 23, basically outlining their platform.

I want him maybe to address in his last two minutes why 115,000 senior citizens were taken off home care and maybe why this government decided to pop a 15% increase on long-term-care facility copayments for our senior citizens. Then, when the outcry came really loud, they said, "We'll do you a favour; we'll spread it over three years." And when the outcry continued, "You're still being unfair to our senior citizens," they sat back and

said, "Maybe we'll steal an idea from Dalton that it should be just the cost of living, like the three to four per cent everybody else has to pay. Maybe we should consider that." Maybe he'd like to address that and simply say, "Yes, we do have an answer. We'll stop doing this senior citizen hokey-pokey across the province and pretend we really care about them, and yet when it comes time for the election we'll show them how much we love them."

Tell us why 115,000 senior citizens were kicked off home care. Please tell us why. Please tell us why you charge them a 15% increase on their copayments in long-term-care facilities. Tell us why, and we'll be able to understand that nice and clear.

Let's talk about the bill—I only have about 15 seconds. Let me put it this way: Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals forced this legislation. They needed to reform it, but the reforms came after exposing our consumers to unscrupulous huskers; they should have been addressed before. We know that.

The Deputy Speaker: The member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale has two minutes to reply.

Mr Gill: First of all, I want to thank all the honourable members who spoke on what I spoke about: the member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, the member from Timmins-James Bay, the minister from Nepean-Carleton and the member from Brant. I especially liked the two-minute hit from the minister from Nepean-Carleton, because he was so right. As soon as the minister took charge of the energy portfolio, I was the first one knocking on his door.

Hon Mr Baird: You barged in.

Mr Gill: I barged in because that's my style. I come from the private sector. I believe in picking up the phone and talking to the minister directly. I want to thank you, because I found the door open; anyone can come and talk to the young, energetic and hard-working minister. I do appreciate it and want to thank him.

I do take the invitation from the member from Timmins-James Bay to come to his riding. He's going to give me a ride in his plane and look at all these communities that are widespread in his riding. Maybe he can also explain to me about companies that were shutting down when they were in power; I'm not sure what the reason was. I know what the reason was, but I don't think they're willing to admit it.

Yes, we'll talk about seniors; we'll talk about the seniors' education tax credit. I was so thankful to the Premier that he came to my great riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale and unveiled that at Mrs Olive Russell's house that day.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Would the member for Brant come to order.

Mr Gill: We believe that seniors who have paid so much to this province should keep more of their own money, because they know best how to use it.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Brown: It is indeed a pleasure to be speaking to Bill 23 this afternoon. First, I want to say that this bill does address some of the issues surrounding consumer protection that needed very much to be addressed.

Last spring, a year ago, Speaker, you would know that in private members' hour, I brought before this House a resolution asking that constituents of mine, as a matter of fact the whole province, should be protected from the door-to-door sales antics of electricity retailers. By a very narrow margin, we managed to have that resolution adopted, but it had absolutely no effect in the short term as the government chose to ignore the wishes of the House. My actual resolution asked that door-to-door sales of electricity contracts be stopped. The government chose not to do that. I still believe that to be a mistake. We still get many inquiries from people who signed retail agreements with electricity retailers that have cost them a great deal of money. People were very upset with the misrepresentations they were receiving at the door.

Nonetheless, we're here with a bill that purports to protect consumers. It will, in at least some ways, address the situation we had with natural gas. Last year, my colleagues and I spent much time trying to convince the government to do something about the practice of gas companies retroactively charging people for gas they had already consumed at a price they'd already agreed to. It was absolutely impossible to believe that was going on in this province. We have to say to the government that in addressing that situation, albeit a year late, it is something we can support.

But it is very difficult to stand here and try to reward the arsonists for trying to put out the fire, and that is exactly what's going on here. The government chose to open the market last May 1, knowing full well what every member in this House should have known, because on a daily basis members on this side of the House told the government there was not adequate supply. Without adequate supply, there could be no possibility that we would have reasonable prices in the province. You could not open a market. They ignored that.

What did that mean to my constituents? It meant that we had the only dry cleaner, for example, on Manitoulin Island, Leyal Cleaners at West Bay, out of business. That's what that meant. It meant many of my smaller resorts, hotels, restaurants, variety stores and grocery stores were under severe pressure because electricity prices were forcing them to the brink. Even as we speak, I have had in my office at least three small businesses, that employ a fair number of people, calling just this week to ask us if we could intervene with Hydro One to have their electricity bill payment schedule expanded or have something done with it to keep them from going bankrupt before they got to the tourist season, when they hoped they could make some money to pay the bills.

Absolutely extraordinary. But most extraordinary of all is that, as all members would know, 15% of the electricity in this province has always been private, has never been public, had nothing to do with public, Ontario Hydro, whatever, other than that it was regulated by the

Ontario Energy Board. That was their only relationship. The Great Lakes Power area, an area that for about a century had been supplied with power by Great Lakes Power, now a Brascan company, had, if not the lowest electricity prices in Ontario, very close to the lowest. It is a vast geographical area, but the company was quite profitable. It owned generation, distribution and transmission, and for many years—as I said, almost a century—supplied electricity to that part of the world at extraordinarily competitive prices.

1730

Came the government, believing in the private market, if you can believe that. What did they do? What was the effect of the government's policy on electricity? The effect was to almost double the rates paid by many customers in the Great Lakes area. I and the members for St Paul's and Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke and many others on this side of the House have alluded to the situation in communities like Dubreuilville, where the forest company saw rates increase by 80%, which made operation of the company totally unviable. We are looking at a large number of people today in Dubreuilville who are unemployed, in large part because of the electricity policy of this government.

In my efforts to find a solution to this problem in the Great Lakes Power area, I managed to get a meeting together with Great Lakes Power, Dubreuil Forest Products, people from the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines and people from the Ministry of Energy. One of the solutions that became apparent, after they talked amongst themselves, was that rural rate assistance within the Great Lakes Power area would be of huge assistance in providing a reasonable electricity distribution and transmission cost, which would reduce the power rates to something at least competitive with the Hydro One area.

I have been reading petitions constantly since the Legislature came back. The Minister of Energy has now recognized that rural rate assistance is a policy that would not only be fair but is mandatory in the Great Lakes Power area and would make residential and small business customers competitive again. He also recognizes, as I do, that this is only part of the solution. Larger customers and the large industrial customers like Dubreuil Forest Products need to have a real rethink of the regulation.

The problem from my constituency's point of view is that my constituents have been taken prisoner by an ideology that just doesn't work in the Great Lakes area. It doesn't even work in the Hydro One area. I've had complaints from Chapleau and Espanola, which operate their own PUCs, that they're having their share of fun trying to make this policy work for their consumers also.

A large number of my constituents, and constituents across northern Ontario, are unemployed because of the electricity policy of this particular government. We have a large number of people on fixed incomes who are unable to pay their electricity bills and will soon be out of their homes. We have countless businesses either on the brink of bankruptcy or already gone out of business

because of the electricity policy of this government. It is time that the government not only comes in with increased consumer protection, which Bill 23 talks about, but moves on the issues of rural and northern electricity distribution and transmission costs in a way that makes us again competitive in Ontario and in the world.

Thank you very much for this opportunity, Mr Speaker. I await the inevitable questions and comments.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Martin: I want to say I appreciate the chance to speak following the speech by the member for Algoma-Manitoulin. He very rightly points out that much of what this government is doing where hydro is concerned is affecting probably most directly and most clearly some of his very own constituents. I suggest that this bill that we're debating here today, and have been debating for a number of days, is not going to do anything to relieve them of both the immediate and the long-term challenge that they face where hydroelectricity is concerned.

In the Great Lakes Power area that the member for Algoma-Manitoulin speaks of, it used to be that hydro-electricity was seen as a competitive advantage because it was cheaper, and we used it that way to keep the economy going, to attract new investment and to help those industries.

Mr Brown: But it was private.

Mr Martin: It was private, but it was regulated, and the regulation is what kept the price of electricity in our area, because I represent the city of Sault Ste Marie, in a very competitive capacity. That's what we want. That's why we're calling for a return to regulated hydro and publicly owned hydro, because in our instance, even though we had a private corporation delivering, they were very much under the control of Ontario Hydro and the regulating regime that existed then. As I said, it gave us a very competitive advantage. Now that competitive advantage has become a disadvantage, because the hydro prices that communities like Dubreuilville, White River and Wawa are having to pay put them in a very disadvantageous position.

Hon Mr Baird: I enjoyed the remarks by my friend from Algoma-Manitoulin. He is one of the members in this House who speaks up regularly on energy issues, one of the more rational members of the opposition.

I particularly agreed with him when he spoke about the fact that a big chunk of our electricity system in Ontario was already private. One of the things he and I have talked about is how the NDP privatized electricity when they brought in the non-utility generator agreement. That's where they paid the private sector big amounts of money to build power plants and then guaranteed them a rate for years. Instead of having it be government-owned and government-operated, they're run by the private sector.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Hon Mr Baird: The non-utility generators were done by the NDP.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Baird: They were done by the NDP.

The Deputy Speaker: I will not warn the member from Timmins-James Bay again.

Hon Mr Baird: So that was private power under Bob Rae, but that was then and this is now. It's sort of like public auto insurance. They promised it, got into government and then didn't do anything about it and said they wouldn't do anything about it. They said that private auto insurance discriminates against people, and the economy was in rough shape then, so the discrimination would go on until the economy got better. That's an interesting argument.

But I did also notice the member opposite talk about the situation in Wawa. He and I have met about 10 times about that issue. Instead of lighting himself on fire, he does come and speak to me about these issues. I think it's important to resolve the issue in Wawa. The Premier of Ontario, Ernie Eves, said he felt it was important to solve the issue, as did the Minister of Northern Development, and we look forward to seeing a quick and speedy resolution to the Wawa issue.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. And I'll not warn the member for Sault Ste Marie again.

Mr Levac: I appreciate deeply what the member for Algoma-Manitoulin, Mr Brown, talks about in terms of small business. He brought us right down to face the reality that some of the policies that have taken place over the last eight years have resulted in business loss as well, the small mom-and-pop operations, because this energy problem has caused very great consternation in his riding, and I would suggest that it has happened in my riding as well. You would not believe the number of phone calls, e-mails and letters I have received from constituents who have small businesses that just couldn't do it. They just couldn't do it any more. He explained to us that a small little drycleaner had to close up simply because they couldn't afford double, triple, quadruple, 10 times, 20 times their regular bills. It's unbelievable to think that we would allow this to happen in Ontario.

1740

The question I have that I think really needs resolution is, what do we do for them? It's already happened. What are we going to do for them? Are we now saying, "Sorry about your luck. Too bad, so sad. Go start another business somewhere"? I would guess that this business Mr Brown is talking about probably was in town for 30 or 40 years. We're talking generational. They're saying to us, and I know they're saying it in my riding, "We're not coming back. We don't want to go through this again. We've had it. We're gone."

So I would ask this serious question of the minister, and say to him in very serious terms, are we going to do something for those people who have for 30 years run these businesses and because of a hydro bill had to close shop? Are we going to go back to them and say, "Here's some type of compensation. Sorry about that"? Are we going to give them a certificate and say, "Thanks for

giving us 30 years of your life, and goodbye"? We need some response.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: I'm naming the member for Timmins-James Bay, Mr Bisson.

Mr Bisson was escorted from the chamber.

Mr Levac: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Given the caucus is down to one, I would seek unanimous consent for the two minutes to be provided to the member who is present.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there consent? I heard a no.

Comments and questions? The Chair recognizes the member for Algoma-Manitoulin for two minutes' reply.

Mr Brown: Thank you, Mr Speaker, but there was a member on the government bench wishing to question or comment.

Well, I appreciate the comments from my friend from Brant and my friend from Sault Ste Marie and the minister. It does not, however, help many of the constituents I have in the Hydro One and Great Lakes Power areas. We get calls daily about electricity bills that cannot be paid. That means people are going to have to make some choices about whether they buy food, whether they pay the rent, whether they pay the mortgage or whether they pay the electricity bill. It means they're going to have to decide whether they can stay in business, whether they have to lay off staff or whether they're just going to have to go, in some cases, on to some kind of government assistance.

I don't want to overstate it, but the situation in some parts of the Great Lakes Power area is critical, and I think that after over a year of doing everything possible from a community's point of view, the government needs to understand that the urgency was yesterday, not tomorrow.

Hon Mr Baird: Today.

Mr Brown: The minister is saying it's today, so we're looking for an answer quickly today.

It doesn't seem that long ago, but when the member for St Paul's and I went to Wawa to ask the minister to talk to those folks last November, we thought part of the solution was to roll out the rebate, to get that 4.3-cent cap out there so at least they got some relief. The government moved, so now the government can move to fix the distribution and transmission costs that are crippling that area of the province.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Martin: The comments by the minister just a few minutes ago remind me of the saying, "Rome burned while Nero fiddled." Wawa's been waiting a long time for some response, some relief from this minister and this government, and it's not coming. Even when they say it's coming, we don't know what to believe any more because it wasn't that long ago that Great Lakes Power announced, after the Premier was in Sault Ste Marie, that they were in fact going to get a reduction in the generation piece of their bill. It hasn't happened.

Mr Brown: Distribution.

Mr Martin: The distribution piece of the bill. They were actually quite relieved that they were going to get at least a little bit—I emphasize "a little bit"—of relief on the distribution portion of the bill, but it hasn't happened.

I was in Wawa on Monday, this week, and I was talking to the folks there about this announcement that was made very publicly by Great Lakes Power right after the Premier was in town. He was forced to say, "Yes, we're going to take a look at Wawa. Wawa's a problem. We need to deal with the issue of Wawa and the high hydro rates, and we're going to do that. I'm going to be talking to my minister about that." There was this announcement that said Great Lakes Power was going to give some relief on the distribution side of the bill. As of Monday, that hasn't happened. When Great Lakes Power is approached as to why it hasn't happened, they say, "The ministry has to fix the regulation," so that they can do that.

I have to tell you that the people of Wawa are wondering why the minister can't find time in his busy schedule to actually do that, to fix that regulation such that Great Lakes Power can deliver on that promise and perhaps even consider making it retroactive, why he won't call them back when they call, why he won't meet with them so that he can explain why he cannot give Great Lakes Power the green light to go ahead and give them that relief that was promised, why a private sector company like Great Lakes Power can't just go ahead and give that relief anyway and why they have to go to government for permission to do that.

Those are the questions the people of Wawa were asking Gilles Bisson, the member for Timmins-James Bay, and myself on Monday when we went up to talk to them about some of the challenges they're facing economically in that very important part of this province that's struggling and hurting with every day that goes by. Every day that Nero fiddles, every day that John Baird sits on this issue and doesn't do anything, another business leaves Wawa, never to return, another investment by a family of their life savings in work they do well, a commitment to that community and to that part of northern Ontario, goes down the river, disappears forever and will not return.

What do you say to them? What do you say to those people as you wait? What are you going to say in a week, two weeks, a month, six months, or after the next election perhaps, to those folks who have lost their investment, who have lost their business, who perhaps have left town? Senior citizens, retired on fixed incomes who couldn't pay their hydro bills any more: what do you say to them? What do we say to them as a government? How do we explain that Mr Baird just didn't have time? He was too busy. He's now become the House leader so he'll be even busier, I guess, down here. How will the people of Wawa be satisfied by this government that something is being done?

I asked the question of the minister yesterday in the House, explaining to him the very dire circumstances that the people of Wawa are living under with each day that goes by, and that the people of Dubreuilville are living

under as their plant now goes down to a bare-bones operation because of the cost of doing business and the effect of the economy that's out there that this government seems to be taking a hands-off approach to. What do we say to them? I asked the Premier yesterday what he had to say, and he said some nice things. He was very understanding, very sympathetic. He understood the situation, offered the people of Wawa and Dubreuilville some salve, I guess, to rub on their wounds. Perhaps one other small business decided that today they won't throw in the towel, that they'll wait one more day or maybe a week until they can determine what the Premier meant when he said, "Yes, we have to do something about Wawa," and, "Yes, we are looking at what we might do."

If it's anything like the announcement that was made by Great Lakes Power only a couple of weeks ago and the result of that, which is that nothing has happened, then I would say to those people, it won't surprise me if you don't put much faith in the promise or the commitment that the Premier has made. But at least the Premier, when you ask him a question, will respond in a way that gives you to understand that he actually understands and is willing to perhaps challenge the Minister of Energy to in fact do something. Maybe the government will do, in this instance, what they did with the Oak Ridges moraine and the Minister of Natural Resources, who couldn't move, who seemed to be paralyzed or influenced by other interests where that park is concerned, and take it out of his hands altogether and in fact do something. Maybe the Premier will come in here one day and table a bill that will deal with the problem of the people of Wawa and the people of Dubreuilville and take it away altogether from the Minister of Energy, who doesn't seem to have any interest or political will or backbone where this very troubling and disturbing and damaging piece of public business is concerned.

1750

So here we are this afternoon, talking about a bill that's supposed to resolve all of the difficult circumstances that we find ourselves in because this government is ideologically driven to the privatization and the deregulation of the power system that we have so long counted on and relied on in this province to deliver affordable, reliable energy, some of the most essential services that industry and business in this province are dependent on if they're going to be competitive out there in the marketplace. The very damaging effects of that became so obvious out there that the government, in their attempt to manage the damage, first of all looked to Ontario Hydro and Eleanor Clitheroe as a scapegoat and threw them overboard. Then they looked to the Ontario Energy Board and Floyd Laughren, and they blamed him and they blamed that board for their problems. They weren't being tough enough on industry, as if this government knew what it meant to be tough with anybody except welfare people, unions or teachers.

They decided then, after they'd done all of that and the fire hadn't gone out and the concern hadn't gone away and people hadn't just said, "OK, that's fine; you've

solved it"—people demanded, clamoured for more action by this government. In fact our leader, Howard Hampton, leading the charge from the very beginning on this issue, has the people of Ontario out there informed and knowledgeable enough now to know that the only answer to this problem is to go back to regulation and the public ownership of that very essential service in this province. As a matter of fact, he has put out a very important book recently on public power that people, given an opportunity, should get hold of and read. It gives you a very excellent history of public power, from the time of Adam Beck to now, and some suggestions as to how it is we might get from where we are now into the future with a new source of reliable, environmentally friendly energy at an affordable cost.

If you're interested at all in an alternative to what this government is providing, then I think all you have to do is take a look at the program that our government is putting forward by way of solutions, practical solutions, to the challenge of hydro in this province. We're talking about it everywhere we go. It is—

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Sault Ste Marie, you're using a prop.

Mr Martin: I'm reading a document. I didn't think it was against the rules to read a document in this place as long as you didn't go at it for too long. But anyway, those out there who are knowledgeable and in the know will know that we have a platform out in front of the people of Ontario that we will take into the next election called Public Power. If you're interested in reading that document, go to the Web site, publicpower.ca, and you'll see in there that there is a very detailed bunch of practical solutions for how we respond to and deal with the issue, and the challenge, of power in this province. If you want more detail, pick up the book that Howard Hampton has written, called Public Power, and have a read of that, and you will be pleasantly surprised that there are alternatives; that there are alternatives to the program that this government is rolling out and to the maybe-today-not-tomorrow program of the Liberals that we see.

I appreciate the time I've had this afternoon and look forward to other people's comments.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): I'm pleased to respond to the member from Sault Ste Marie. I did want to address an issue that has been near and dear to my heart, which of course the minister failed to address in a meaningful way, and that's the retroactive Union Gas increase that came about last fall.

The minister brought in this legislation to protect consumers, but he still allowed that increase to go ahead. In our opinion, and in my opinion, the minister could have forced a review under existing acts, under two sections. Now the government says that one section is a policy section; it doesn't deal specifically. But the other section—there has been a request from a number of groups to cabinet that that retroactive increase not be allowed. That retroactive increase affected tens of thousands of consumers across the province. This bill,

while it purports to take certain steps to protect consumers, in fact doesn't go far enough on a number of key issues.

But most importantly, the minister did not address the increase that Union Gas got last year. I remind the minister that I presented thousands of petitions; we had over 9,000 e-mails brought into this House from Union Gas consumers across the province. In our view, the minister could have acted under the existing legislation. By not going far enough in this legislation, he may be able to prevent future retroactive increases, but the fact remains that the one that caused this is still there. Those consumers have to pay a retroactive increase. That increase applies unfairly to many individuals, many businesses. At this last moment in the debate, I urge the minister, with his existing legislation: don't let that retroactive gouging of consumers go ahead. Under two sections of the existing legislation, in our view and in the view of many consumer advocates, you can force an end to that retroactive increase. I urge the minister: please do that.

Hon Mr Baird: I always think it's unfortunate when a member stands in the House and suggests that one of his or her 102 colleagues doesn't care; that they don't care about the plight of working families in this province or that they don't care about the plight of family businesses where people have put their life savings on the line to create jobs and provide for themselves or their families. We can all disagree about the root—people want to get to a destination—but I think it's regrettable, and I think it's unfortunate and disappointing, when people make the debate personal.

Mr Brown: I want to comment on my colleague the member for Sault Ste Marie's comments. I was interested in his comments regarding Wawa, which I believe was his hometown for many years. He obviously cares about that part of the world a lot.

He also spent some time in Elliot Lake. When we discuss hydro issues and Ontario Hydro issues, it's hard for the member for Algoma-Manitoulin not to think back to the history of Elliot Lake and the promises that were made to the people of Elliot Lake by the member's own party.

Back in 1990, there was a very clear promise by the New Democratic Party of Ontario to buy 100% of the uranium needs for Ontario's nuclear reactors from Ontario. What that meant was that 100% of the uranium in the province of Ontario would be purchased from the mines in Elliot Lake. That was the commitment of the NDP. They made it over and over again at every opportunity on every stump.

As the member from Algoma-Manitoulin in those days, I thought that was a magnificent promise that seemed to be wonderful for the people of Elliot Lake, and I applauded them at every opportunity. But, lo and behold, not even one year into the mandate of the NDP government, I saw two NDP ministers appear in my constituency to announce the layoff of 2,400 workers in Elliot Lake—2,400 workers—in direct opposition to the

sacred promise they had made to the voters in Algoma-Manitoulin and across the province. That was the end of the mines in Elliot Lake. It was the end of that part of our economy.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: I'll ask the members to recall those lessons that they heard on decorum and try to remember them, so that I don't have to remind them.

1800

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I don't have a long historical memory of this place and who said what or did what, so I have to talk about what I remember.

A little under two years ago in the by-election in Beaches-East York, I remember very clearly one night, at an all-candidates meeting, a question was asked from the audience: "What about hydroelectricity? Are you in favour of privatizing hydroelectricity?"

I have to tell you, as a municipal politician at that time, I had never really given this much thought. But my first gut reaction was, why would anyone want to privatize hydroelectricity? It had been absolutely, totally successful in our province. It always went on when you flicked the switch. It was low-cost. It was reliable. It was affordable. It was simply there. It was something we all as Ontarians had come to expect and know. Who would want another model other than what we had? I was very surprised after I said that that all of the other candidates sitting on the podium with me stood up one after the other to laud privatization.

First, as no surprise, was the Conservative candidate, Mr Penny, who stood up and talked about how important it was to privatize this key resource. That surprised me a little, but what surprised me more was that the Liberal candidate, Mr Hunter, stood up and said that privatization of hydroelectricity was a thing whose time had come and that it was going to be good for the environment, and gave a whole convoluted statement. Even Mr Elgie from the Green Party said that this was something that was in their platform.

I was very surprised that night. After the election I came here, and we've spent about two years arguing and talking about this issue almost every day. I will tell you, I am no more convinced of the argument today than I was that night in that all-candidates meeting in Beaches-East York. The arguments being made for privatization are really quite specious.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Sault Ste Marie has two minutes to reply.

Mr Martin: I will initially deal very quickly with the revisionist history just presented here in this House by the member from Algoma-Manitoulin. I won't deal with it in any detail, but I dare say that the member from Nickel Belt will want to in the very near future because she and a number of her cabinet colleagues came to Elliot Lake, yes, but after the company announced that they were shutting down and moving on. Since when do ministers announce layoffs by private companies? I've never seen it. It didn't happen then, and I suggest to you

that the people of Elliot Lake know that it didn't happen in that instance.

In fact, what our government did was respond very quickly and generously to a community that was on the ropes, something that this government doesn't seem to know much about—responding quickly and generously to communities that are on the ropes. Communities like Wawa, Dubreuilville, White River, Cochrane, Smooth Rock Falls and Timmins are being hammered by the huge increases in the cost of hydro to do their business. The forestry industry, the second-largest in Ontario, is on the ropes, primarily because of the high cost of hydro. They are very energy-intensive industries in northern Ontario, and this bill that we're discussing here today isn't going to go anywhere near resolving that problem.

We have the minister over there—Nero fiddling while Rome is burning. We have communities, industries, businesses, families and individuals in northern Ontario losing their investments, their homes and their livelihoods each day that this is allowed to continue. The government and this minister do nothing. He won't even return phone calls; won't agree to a meeting. As a matter of fact, when a meeting is held—yes, organized by the member from Algoma-Manitoulin in his own precinct—he's down the hall in his office and doesn't come in and sit in on the meeting to hear from the people of Wawa and Dubreuilville as they explain to him the dire circumstances that they have to live under.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'll take just a second of the House's time to indicate that a good friend of Minister Galt's and mine and many another member of the party has joined us in the gallery here today: the past president of the PC Party, Miss Kay Wetherall.

The Deputy Speaker: Welcome.

It being past 6 pm, this concludes the sessional day's debate on Bill 23. By agreement of the House earlier today, the House may now consider orders G43 and/or G53.

ONTARIO HOME PROPERTY TAX RELIEF FOR SENIORS ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR L'ALLÈGEMENT DE L'IMPÔT FONCIER RÉSIDENTIEL POUR LES PERSONNES ÂGÉES DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 9, 2003, on the motion for second reading of Bill 43, An Act to

provide Ontario home property tax relief for seniors /
Projet de loi 43, Loi prévoyant un allègement de l'impôt
foncier résidentiel pour les personnes âgées de l'Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Pursuant to the order of the House dated June 11, 2003, I am now required to put the question. On June 2, 2003, Mrs Ecker moved second reading of Bill 43.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

I have a note that says, "Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I would like to request that the vote on Bill 43, An Act to provide Ontario home property tax relief for seniors, be deferred until June 19, 2003. Signed, Honourable Doug Galt, chief government whip." So be it.

THE RIGHT CHOICES FOR EQUITY IN EDUCATION ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LES BONS CHOIX POUR L'ÉQUITÉ EN MATIÈRE D'ÉDUCATION (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 16, 2003, on the motion for second reading of Bill 53, An Act respecting the equity in education tax credit / Projet de loi 53, Loi concernant le crédit d'impôt pour l'équité en matière d'éducation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Pursuant to the order of the House dated June 17, 2003, I am now required to put the question. On June 10, 2003, Mr Runciman moved second reading of Bill 53.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

I have a note: "Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I would like to request that the vote on Bill 53, An Act respecting the equity in education tax credit, be deferred until June 19, 2003. Signed, Honourable Dr Doug Galt, chief government whip." So be it.

It being whatever time it is right now, this House stands adjourned until 10 am tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1808.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon James K. Bartleman

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
Ancaster-Dundas-	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Marie (L)
Flamborough-Aldershot		Hamilton West / -Ouest	Christopherson, David (ND)
Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Hastings-Frontenac-	Dombrowsky, Leona (L)
Beaches-East York	Prue, Michael (ND)	Lennox and Addington	
Bramalea-Gore-Malton-	Gill, Raminder (PC)	Huron-Bruce	Johns, Hon / L'hon Helen (PC)
Springdale			Minister of Agriculture and Food /
Brampton Centre / -Centre	Spina, Joseph (PC)		ministre de l'Agriculture et de
Brampton West-Mississauga /	Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC)		l'Alimentation
Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Minister of Health and Long-Term	Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the
	Care / ministre de la Santé et des		New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau
	Soins de longue durée		Parti démocratique
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kingston and the Islands /	Gerretsen, John (L)
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kingston et les îles	
Burlington	Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC)
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)		Deputy Premier, Minister of Education /
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)		vice-première ministre, ministre de
Don Valley East / -Est	Caplan, David (L)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	l'Éducation
Don Valley West / -Ouest	Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC)	Lanark-Carleton	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
	Associate Minister of Enterprise,		Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC)
	Opportunity and Innovation / ministre		Attorney General, minister responsible
	associé de l'Entreprise, des Débouchés		for native affairs / procureur général,
	et de l'Innovation		ministre délégué aux Affaires
Dufferin-Peel-	Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie (PC) Premier	Leeds-Grenville	autochtones
Wellington-Grey	and President of the Executive Council,		Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W.
	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs /		(PC) Minister of Public Safety and
	premier ministre et président du		Security / ministre de la Sécurité et de la
	Conseil exécutif, ministre des Affaires		Sécurité publique
	intergouvernementales	London North Centre /	Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC)
Durham	O'Toole, John R. (PC)	London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Training, Colleges and
Eglinton-Lawrence	Colle, Mike (L)		Universities, minister responsible for
Elgin-Middlesex-London	Peters, Steve (L)		women's issues / ministre de la
Erie-Lincoln	Hudak, Hon / L'hon Tim (PC)	London West / -Ouest	Formation et des Collèges et Universités,
	Minister of Consumer and Business	London-Fanshawe	ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
	Services / ministre des Services aux	Markham	Wood, Bob (PC)
	consommateurs et aux entreprises		Mazzilli, Frank (PC)
Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L)		Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC)
Etobicoke Centre / -Centre	Stockwell, Chris (PC)		Chair of the Management Board of
Etobicoke North / -Nord	Hastings, John (PC)		Cabinet, Minister of Culture / président
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)		du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement,
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Mississauga Centre / -Centre	ministre de la Culture
Guelph-Wellington	Elliott, Hon / L'hon Brenda (PC)	Mississauga East / -Est	Sampson, Rob (PC)
	Minister of Community, Family and		DeFaria, Hon / L'hon Carl (PC)
	Children's Services / ministre des		Minister of Citizenship, minister
	Services à la collectivité, à la famille		responsible for seniors / ministre des
	et à l'enfance		Affaires civiques, ministre délégué aux
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Mississauga South / -Sud	Affaires des personnes âgées
Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Hodgson, Chris (PC)		Marland, Margaret (PC)
Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)		

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Nepean-Carleton	Baird, Hon / L'hon John R. (PC) Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, government House leader / ministre de l'Énergie, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones, parlementaire du gouvernement	Scarborough Southwest / -Sud-Ouest	Newman, Hon / L'hon Dan (PC) Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre associé de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Niagara Centre / -Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Alvin (L)
Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)	Simcoe North / -Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)
Nipissing	McDonald, AL (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Minister of the Environment / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines, ministre de l'Environnement
Northumberland	Galt, Hon / L'hon Doug (PC) Minister without Portfolio, chief government whip / ministre sans portefeuille, whip en chef du gouvernement	St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)
		St Paul's	Bryant, Michael (L)
		Stoney Creek	Clark, Hon / L'hon Brad (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Oak Ridges	Klees, Hon / L'hon Frank (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh	Cleary, John C. (L)
Oakville	Carr, Hon / L'hon Gary (PC) Speaker / Président	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Hon / L'hon Jerry J. (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles	Thornhill	Molinari, Hon / L'hon Tina R. (PC) Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre associée des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	McLeod, Lyn (L)
Ottawa-Orléans	Coburn, Hon / L'hon Brian (PC) Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs	Thunder Bay-Superior North / -Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Ramsay, David (L)
Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Ottawa-Vanier	Boyer, Claudette (Ind)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Smitherman, George (L)
Oxford	Hardeman, Hon / L'hon Ernie (PC) Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre associé des Affaires municipales et du Logement	Toronto-Danforth	Churley, Marilyn (ND)
		Trinity-Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
		Vaughan-King-Aurora	Sorbara, Greg (L)
		Waterloo-Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC)
		Whitby-Ajax	Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation / ministre de l'Entreprise, des Débouchés et de l'Innovation
Parkdale-High Park	Kennedy, Gerard (L)	Willowdale	Young, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Parry Sound-Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)		Pupatello, Sandra (L)
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Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)		Kwinter, Monte (L)
Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC) Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances		Munro, Julia (PC)
	Parsons, Ernie (L)		Cordiano, Joseph (L)
Prince Edward-Hastings	Conway, Sean G. (L)		
Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke			
Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)		
Sault Ste Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)		
Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)		
Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)		
		Windsor West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)
		Windsor-St Clair	
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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Fourth Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Quatrième session, 37^e législature

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Thursday 19 June 2003

Jeudi 19 juin 2003



Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 19 June 2003

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 19 juin 2003

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND CULTURE AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE MINISTÈRE DES AFFAIRES CIVIQUES ET CULTURELLES

Mr Beaubien moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 54, An Act to amend the Ministry of Citizenship and Culture Act / Projet de loi 54, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le ministère des Affaires civiques et culturelles.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): The member has up to 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): It certainly is a pleasure for me to introduce this bill this morning. The bill would require the Ministry of Citizenship and Culture to establish a program to provide information, upon request, to a municipality or a charitable institution about constructing a tribute to honour persons who are or were residents of Ontario and who served in the armed services of Canada in any war outside Canada during the 20th century. If a body constructs such a memorial, the ministry is required to remit a scroll of recognition to those persons whom the memorial honours and whom the ministry considers to come within the description of persons who may properly be honoured.

On June 12, I had the opportunity to attend a book launch in Wallaceburg. The title of the book is *No Return Ticket*, and it's written by Al Mann. Basically, this book recognizes the veterans who lost their lives in the Wallaceburg area during the world wars. Today I want to talk about the veterans who fought in wars but had a return ticket to come back to Canada, to come back to Ontario—not that I want to forget the ones who gave up their lives, but I think over the past number of years we have somehow left the ones who came back to Ontario or to Canada somewhat behind.

The impetus for this bill came from Gert McClure, a resident in my riding, the community of Wallaceburg. Gert came upon this idea a while back. She was driving on the main street of Wallaceburg and saw two young teenagers skateboarding on the cenotaph in Wallaceburg. She stopped her car and had a discussion with the two

young fellows who were skateboarding and asked them whether they recognized or were realizing what they were accomplishing by skateboarding on the cenotaph. One of the young fellows told Gert that his grandfather had fought in the Second World War and had lost his life. So they looked on the monument, on the cenotaph and, lo and behold, the name of his grandfather was there. However, the second young fellow said to Gert, "My grandfather also fought in the Second World War." They searched for his grandfather's name on the cenotaph but it was not there.

At that point, Gert reflected and asked the young fellow, "I don't know why his name is not on this cenotaph, but did he lose his life during the Second World War?" The young fellow said, "No. My grandfather came back to Wallaceburg and was very involved in the community." So Gert said, "It doesn't seem to be fair that somebody who participated in a war for a number of years, a number of months or whatever the length of the stay was would not be recognized."

Consequently, she took it upon herself to introduce an idea to the local Legion branch and she called the name of her project "Rock of Honour," whereby you would honour all veterans who fought in wars. Technically, when we really think about it, we have to realize that many of the young men and women who fought, whether it was in World War I or World War II, came back. Some of them came back with injuries, some with permanent injuries, and some of them were lucky enough to come back without any injuries. We have to look at the fact that many of these young men and women came back to their communities in Ontario, in Canada, and were very involved within their own communities. They may have been involved on the local council, on the local hospital board or with the local Legion. But many were also involved with volunteer work, besides maintaining their full-time jobs. If we look back to the early 1950s and 1960s, arenas were built in communities by many volunteers. I'm sure if we were to assess the types of volunteers, we'd find that many of them had some war experience during the Second World War.

We also have to look at the fact that some of them may be dead now and some may be in retirement homes or nursing homes. But I'd like to zero in on a friend of mine, who passed away a couple of years ago, who fought in the Second World War and lived the rest of his life with shrapnel in his body. His name was George Menzies. George came back after the war and became an Anglican minister, very involved in the community, very involved with sports teams, involved with the local

hospital board, and later on in life he became a canon in the Anglican Church. Sometimes we forget that even though we recognize the fact that Canon Menzies was a veteran, there was really no permanent or acknowledgement that he had fought in the war. On November, 11 we always commemorate the passing of many of the veterans, but today there is really nothing to remember George by. Having a rock of honour, a wall of honour or whatever you want to call it, is a means of recognizing many of these young men and women in the Second World War, who probably gave some of the best years of their lives and have now passed away with no recognition. This bill would give them some type of recognition.

1010

In the community of Peterborough, the local Legion has started a project, also called the Wall of Honour, to recognize some of the veterans who fought in the world wars. I'm looking for comments from my colleagues in this House about ways and means to improve this bill to make sure that we cover all the veterans. Although I'm suggesting the veterans of the wars of the 20th century, I'm sure some of my colleagues will have some other suggestions.

The bottom line is that we have to realize that many people gave their lives and paid the utmost price during the war—with their lives, in other words. By the end of the Second World War, 45,000 people would sacrifice their lives for our freedom, but equally important is that 55,000 would be wounded defending our country and our freedom. I think we owe it to them, because most of them are getting to an age where there is not much chance for them to have recognition. Like I said, many of them are in residential and nursing homes.

But all we want to do is what Gert wanted to accomplish. She wanted to do something because, as I pointed out, we lose more and more of our veterans with each passing day. She recognized the urgency of doing something now. She was determined to construct a tribute to all the Wallaceburg veterans by inscribing their names on the large stones at the Wallaceburg cenotaph site. To date, her research has revealed the names of more than 900 Wallaceburg citizens who fought in various wars during the 20th century. As I said, she wants to call this project The Rock of Honour.

In conclusion, that is why I have prepared this bill and asked for my colleagues' thoughtful consideration and speedy approval. As a government, we have a province-wide responsibility to not only recognize and pay tribute to our veterans, but to play an active role in assisting municipalities or interested community organizations that desire to do what Gert McClure is doing in Wallaceburg. That's why I'm seeking everybody's support here today.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'm pleased to join the debate and lend my support to the member for his bill. I assume it's been run through the ministry and that they've provided their support, in terms of it being workable and practical. I just make that assumption.

I'm very lucky. I was born in 1940 and was obviously five years old when the Second World War ended. I've been very lucky in my life in that I have not been faced with that very difficult decision to volunteer and head off to a conflict. I often reflect on the stress those people must have gone through, particularly those who were in a combat zone or were heading into a combat zone. I think we know in our own personal lives, when we face minor danger, how stressful that is. I can't imagine, day after day, literally living in fear of your life. All those people made the conscious decision to voluntarily put themselves in that position. They knew what they were going to face. All those who headed off to World War II were familiar with what happened in World War I and the dangers they were going to face. The member is right: often we recognize those who died in the conflict and forget that those who were participants in the conflict suffered and made enormous sacrifice also. I think he mentioned 55,000 wounded in the Second World War. Even if you weren't wounded, you put yourself through years of considerable stress and strain. I do think those people deserve the community recognition.

The second reason is that memories begin to dim over time. We can slowly lose the memory of the enormous conflict that those world wars presented and the need to put enormous energy into preventing similar conflicts in the future. As we look back on both those world wars, I think the world community could say, "If we'd done certain things, we could have avoided those conflicts." But if our memories dim over time of the price we pay for major global conflict, we don't put the time, the energy, and dare I say the resources into trying to prevent them, to see them bubbling and to deal with them.

I think that the bill has merit; I am supporting the bill. I do not have recommendations on how it can be substantially improved, because the bill covers the things that appear to be important. It covers the mechanism whereby a community can proceed with a memorial. It provides the direction for finding the names and addresses of the people who were involved in it.

Just to summarize, I don't think there's a veteran left in the Legislature now. My colleague Gilles Morin was the last veteran we had here; he was a veteran of the Korean War, as I recall. You can see that as time goes by, the first-hand experience begins to diminish. The Legislature has always been fortunate to have individuals here who had first-hand experience with major global conflict, who could bring to the Legislature and the people of Ontario that first-hand experience. As memories dim, we need to do what we can so that we always remember those who died, those who were wounded and those who participated. I repeat, I've regarded myself as a very lucky person. I've grown up in an era with relatively little of that sort of pressure on my life. I can't imagine what it would have been like at the age of 18, or in some cases even 17 years old, to head off for five years—and as Mr Beaubien mentioned, often some of the best years of one's life—to put yourself in harm's way, in a period of constant stress and strain. I do believe that even for those

who were not wounded in the conflict it must have had a very profound impact on the rest of their lives.

As I say, I support the piece of legislation. I hope the Legislature passes it and that many of our communities around Ontario will take advantage of it.

1020

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): We are assembled here today to speak on a private member's bill that proposes to allow the Ministry of Citizenship and Culture to create the framework for municipalities and charitable institutions to recognize those Ontarians who served in 20th century conflicts outside of Canada through memorials.

When asked to speak to this bill, it occurred to me it's a humbling experience to think about those individuals who have participated directly in military conflicts. The closest I've come to understanding that experience, apart from a brief stint in the militia, 56th Field Regiment, is through the melancholic faces of veterans and families on Remembrance Day. As has been indicated earlier, how fortunate we are here in Canada and in Ontario to never have experienced war on this continent during one of history's most bloody centuries.

I would be remiss, this being Loyalist Day, if I didn't mention the sacrifice of United Empire Loyalists in the late 1700s and those who fought in 1763. Descendants of those who fought with Joseph Brant in the 1763 battle, during what was the British conquest of North America, reside in my riding. We should continue to recognize valiant Canadian fighters who defended our land during the War of 1812. For that reason, and recognizing these past conflicts in previous centuries, I would like to see this legislation expanded to encompass battles in previous centuries in our country.

In the 20th century, Canada was indeed blessed. Can you imagine, while Europe was cut in two by a muddy eight-foot trench, while bombs rained over ships, while the threat of nuclear war loomed, while the desert sun shone down on fighters, we in Canada never experienced the destructive effect of battle on our land here?

Can you imagine being one of those combatants who experienced the fight, the whiz of gunfire, the flash of an explosion or, worse, the death of a fellow soldier, a fellow pilot, a fellow sailor? Any of these occurrences must be among the worst an individual can experience. Can you imagine the difficulty of living with those memories and going through the horror once one returns to the normalcy of family life at home?

The tradition certainly has been to recognize and honour the war dead. We think of the cenotaphs that are present in every municipality across this province. However, the question before us today is whether or not to allow the ministry to facilitate municipalities and charitable organizations in recognizing those who survived war.

In my opinion, this bill is a good one. The intention is honourable, and its creation is necessary, in my view. I firmly believe that it's important for us to recognize in an important way the combatants who survived war and to

thank them and their families in a more permanent way. Again, if a community wants to raise a monument, a plaque or a statue to the survivors, the House and our ministry should encourage that to happen.

I do wish to address further the content of the bill. I believe there are some additions that could be made to recognize not only those who fought in the 20th century but in previous centuries in other battles. I believe the definition should be extended to allow for assistance in honouring veterans from wars going back to 1763, as I mentioned; 1776; the War of 1812, an international war in which Upper Canadians fought, which led to the disarmament of the Canadian-American border.

I think it's important to recognize the efforts of militiamen who fought against what was perceived as a national threat: the Fenian raids—raids that stretched from New Brunswick to Upper Canada in the 1860s. You see memorials to those who fought in the Fenian raids in Ottawa.

Again, battles in both Upper Canada and the United States were fought, and those who came back, those who survived, were never recognized to the extent of those who were killed in battle. Although the values and morals of those bygone eras may be different today, it doesn't lessen the importance of Ontarian combatants' contribution to conflict and, as Mr Beaubien has indicated, their contribution after the wars within their communities.

War has a way of both dividing citizens and creating a sense of national pride. We, the public, are reminded of it through these monuments. We feel this is very important. Although there are no living Canadian veterans of the Fenian raids, the War of 1812, the South African War, the Spanish Civil War—half the Canadians who fought there did not return in 1939. I suggest we recognize these people, we recognize the merchant marines, nurses and civilians who also played a part.

I'm very pleased to support this bill. I hope its parameters will be extended to include that to which I have referred today.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I want to indicate at the very beginning that I intend to support the bill that the member has put forward. I think it is most appropriate that we recognize those in two cases: first, those who have made the supreme sacrifice of their lives fighting in wars overseas to protect freedom, liberty and our recognized way of life; and also that we recognize—and I know the member would like this as well in his bill, but certainly in the general speech—people who have come back from those wars and have served our country as well.

There are a few times during the year when the Royal Canadian Legion and the country have special services that all of us endeavour to attend. The greatest focus, of course, is on Remembrance Day, when the veterans gather along with members of the public, elected representatives and others to remember those who have fought in wars in years gone by. We think mostly of the First World War, the Second World War and the Korean War

as the major wars, but there have been other conflicts in the world in which Canadian soldiers have been involved.

I think if people hearken back to many years ago, they will remember that the crowds were very big. One of the reasons is that the people who had come back from the war were with us. Today, those who served in the Second World War, for instance, would now be in their 70s, at the very least, and perhaps older, of course. Those who served in the Korean War are in their 60s and 70s for the most part.

It was a very difficult time. I think what a lot of people forget—and our former mayor, Joe McCaffrey, said this on an occasion when he was speaking at our local cenotaph. He said that what a lot of people don't realize is that we are paying tribute and remembering very young people. Because the veterans age as all of us age, we see veterans as fairly elderly individuals today. But when they went overseas, these were often people in their late teens and early 20s, who were looking forward to a life ahead of them—families, good jobs and an opportunity to enjoy all of the amenities that life brings for us. That was brought to an abrupt end on so many occasions in times of war.

People in Europe—and I think other parts of the world—tend to recognize Canadian soldiers and their own even more than we do, and I think they do so because they were directly affected. Their countries were invaded, their countries were occupied, and many of them are extremely grateful to Canadian soldiers who went overseas to fight not only for their own country, Canada, but of course on behalf of the countries that were being invaded by those who wanted to impose an entirely different kind of life and regime on those individuals.

1030

In each of our communities it is important that we remember the people from those communities who have served. In St Catharines we have memorials to those who have served in the past. In the old town of Merriton, in the old town of Port Dalhousie, of course in St Catharines itself, in Thorold and other areas there are memorials. Many of us would have attended the Decoration Day services the first Sunday in June of this year, where the graves, in our case in Victoria Lawn Cemetery, are decorated with Canadian flags and where we once again remember and recall and honour those who have died.

On every one of those occasions, in addition to those who have died, we speak of those who have come back, often scarred in more ways than one, often with injuries which are of a physical nature that stay with those individuals—and some of those individuals are in veterans' hospitals—but also the psychological scars that war bring to people.

There is often a lament, I think a justifiable lament, that younger people who have never experienced war and who see war as something in the distant past do not have as good a knowledge of the role that Canadian soldiers, sailors and air force personnel have played in the past, and of the men and women who were involved in the

medical personnel—the merchant navy, for instance—who suffered grievously during the war as well, and of others who in any way helped in the war. I think it's important that we continue to remember them. A memorial in a community, the names of those listed in the community and the story behind them, is exceedingly important.

I attended another Legion ceremony on May 30, where they were honouring members of the Royal Canadian Legion. Many of those people now are well advanced in their years. Some are showing indications of age, but also of injury that was incurred during the war. So whenever we can pay tribute to them, we do so very nicely. There's one time when we are non-partisan in this Legislature, and that is the Thursday before Remembrance Day, or the last day the House sits, at least, before Remembrance Day, when a representative of each party gets up and speaks of those individuals. We walk along with them in the streets, and very often we see that they are walking more slowly now, but they're very proud individuals who have served. Often you see tears in their eyes because they themselves can recall the great difficulties that war has brought to them.

One of the most moving scenes as well, I must say, is the Silver Cross mother coming forward who has lost young people in war—usually they were young when they died in war—and the brothers and sisters and nieces and nephews and sons and daughters and spouses and so on who on that occasion have a special feeling of sadness, but also pride in the fact that their loved one went to serve on behalf of our democratic way of life. I certainly want to pay tribute to them.

The member has brought forward a bill which is most appropriate. Having the Ministry of Citizenship and Culture involved in this exercise I think is extremely important. We should be assisting municipalities and charitable institutions in constructing memorials in honour of persons who are or were residents of Ontario and who served in the Armed Forces of Canada in any wars outside Canada during the 20th century. That encompasses a lot of people, and I think it's important that we do encompass those individuals in this particular piece of legislation.

It's a word of thanks from all of us in this Legislature, a word of thanks from all the people in our communities to those who made a sacrifice, who left their families, who left their friends, who were in very difficult circumstances, terrible weather conditions, being fired at by armaments, sometimes being prisoners of war and not always very well treated as prisoners of war, and seeing the death and devastation that is part of war.

Paying tribute to those individuals is exceedingly important. We do so in our national war memorials; we do so in our communities. This is yet another step that can help individual communities and charitable organizations to thank and pay tribute to and remember those who have served in war and particularly those who have made the supreme sacrifice. I think this bill is worthy of support by all members.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I appreciate the opportunity this morning to speak to this bill. It's always an honour to follow the member for St Catharines, who has served long and honourably in this place, and to also say that we in this caucus will be supporting this bill, of course, because it's a bill that rightfully honours the efforts and sometimes the ultimate sacrifice of many of our veterans, our seniors who went to war on our behalf to protect freedoms and those things that we value and often take for granted in the society we live in today. So we will be supporting this bill.

However, my comments won't be so much targeted at the bill itself, because I think it's a very simple bill and really speaks for itself. The member presenting it made his case, and others will as well. My hope this morning is that the member, in presenting this bill and obviously being connected to veterans in his own jurisdiction and his own Legions, will also be talking to his caucus members and his government about the condition that many of these veterans, having fought for their country and returned, now have to live in: the poverty that many of them experience, the difficulty they're having in finding appropriate and safe housing, not to speak of the issue of health care, which for many of them, and I would guess probably all of them, is a huge task and undertaking and challenge in the world we live in today.

So I think it would behoove this government to investigate across the province the situation that seniors and in particular, in this instance, veterans find themselves in as they try to live a life that reflects the sacrifice they made at those times in our history when they had to be counted on, and were, and stepped up to the line and put their lives on the line, some of them not to come home but many to come home and to now experience the kind of difficulty that they are experiencing in finding the very basics of life so that they can live in dignity.

That's not to forget the difficulty that the organizations that often speak for veterans have as well in keeping their facilities open and providing the services they provide. I know in my own community we have a very vibrant and active Legion which every year on Remembrance Day puts on a wonderful ceremony. They gather the whole community at the community centre at Memorial Gardens—and named Memorial Gardens connected to this—to remember those who passed away and those who fought in those wars.

I have to tell you, in talking with them after the celebration and memorial and in talking with them in my office at times when they come in to speak to me about issues that they confront in trying to keep their facility open, they are having a very difficult time and are looking for assistance and relief to that end. They would love this government to come and sit down, talk with them and develop a plan that they could all agree would give them the kind of support and comfort they need to continue to do the work that they do, so they don't have to spend so much of their time fundraising and worrying about the very existence of their halls, for example, and could spend the kind of time they want to spend looking

after each other, looking after the veterans and providing the kind of support that veterans need.

I remember in 1995, when this government took over, the Legion had been talking to me for a couple of years about a housing complex in their back parking lot which would provide affordable housing to some of the veterans they saw coming to the hall every day so that they could be close, could be looked after, could have some services provided, such as food services etc. We had actually come to a point where we had agreed and had allocated some affordable housing units to the Legion to build, but that got caught by the government when it cancelled all of the not-for-profit and affordable housing projects at that particular point in time. So the spot that that housing unit was going to go up on lies vacant and empty today, as we speak, because this government hasn't found a way to honour the commitment we made to those veterans to actually build that facility.

1040

I was in Wawa on Tuesday, speaking to the leadership of that community about some of the economic challenges they're facing, particularly their inability to deal with the astronomical rise in hydro costs. As we pulled in and parked across the street from the Legion Hall in Wawa, I was told that it's in trouble, that it's having difficulty, financially, trying to keep the lights on and that in fact if things continue the way they are, it may end up closing.

I remember, as a young boy in that community, that the Legion was the heart, the centre of the community. On a Friday night particularly the parents, the adults, who worked in the mines and contributed to the economy of the community would be downstairs having a few drinks, celebrating and getting together as friends and neighbours, and we teenagers would be upstairs having a dance. It was the centre, the social heart, of that community. It stands today on the precipice of extinction because this government is doing nothing about the escalating cost of hydro, amongst other things.

I will be supporting this bill today and my caucus will be supporting it. I think it's the right thing to do. Any time we can honour and support our veterans in this way, we should do it. However, there is a lot more to be done than that in the everyday life of veterans, in some very practical and common-sense ways, to make sure they have an opportunity to live in dignity, to carry themselves through the community with the respect they're due and to know that they have housing, that they have income, that their pensions are protected and that they have the health care they so obviously need and will need as they get older, and more and more unstable in that perspective.

There is one other issue, if I had a bit more time to go on about it, that I would like to speak to the government about, but they don't seem to be too interested. The only member of the government who seems to have any interest at all is Mr Murdoch, because his Legion has come to him, as my Legion has come to me. It's around the issue of small raffles, lotteries and 50-50 draws that

Legions used to have. In many instances they became the only source of income that some of them had to cover the cost of their facilities, to keep the lights on, to be able to buy some flowers or to support a member at a time of the death of a spouse, or sickness in the hospital.

This government has tightened the regulations on how you manage and run lotteries, raffles and 50-50 draws, to the point now where most of the Legions are getting out of them. They're not doing it any more—not to speak of the bingos they can't run any more—because they can't funnel the money they make into the things they have been mandated to do through their charitable status and that historically they've always done.

Today, in saying that I will support this bill and in saying on behalf of my caucus that we will support this bill, I also say that we have a ton more to do if we're actually going to honour the effort and the sacrifice of our veterans and make sure they are in fact allowed to live in the kind of dignity that their service warrants.

I'll leave a little time for my colleague from Niagara Centre to speak.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Of course I'm going to debate this bill. In the interim, Mr Beaubien can organize his speakers' list, if indeed there's one. People should want to speak to it. It's a good piece of legislation, for Pete's sake. Of course we endorse celebrating, commemorating and paying tribute to those women and men who, in the service of our country, but as significantly in the service of humankind—because Canadians have played that role as military personnel—demonstrate courage, commitment and indeed, as has been noted and should never not be noted, make the supreme sacrifice.

This last Decoration Day we're reminded that we'll be there again on Remembrance Day, revisiting our communities. I'm very fortunate to represent communities that are part of small-town Ontario, and small-town Ontario contributed more than its fair share of young women and men during those bloody and tragic wars: the First World War, the Second World War, the Korean War—to call it a “conflict” is to diminish the role that Canadians and so many others played in it—and yes, the war in Vietnam, and conflicts since then where Canadians have played an admirable but no less dangerous role as peacekeeping forces, and continue to.

I say this to Mr Beaubien: I want this bill to pass today. I appreciate we are pressed for time in that this Legislature in all likelihood will rise on June 26, next Thursday. Of course, we'll be coming back in September, but I put to Mr Beaubien, and perhaps in his response he could respond to the query as to why—and it's not a criticism—the bill restricts recognition by virtue of memorials to armed services personnel of the 20th century. Again, this isn't a criticism. It may well have been simply a reflection of the time frame in which the bill was drafted, but we still have armed services personnel out there. We have them out there today, this very day as we speak, putting their lives on the line in the service of their country and of humankind.

The city of Welland has a great cenotaph in Chippewa Park. We gather there for Remembrance Day ceremonies. Thorold, in its park a few blocks from Thorold city hall, and a few blocks from the Legion hall, has a cenotaph that commemorates young residents of Thorold—because they were young. It's old men who start wars and it's young women and men who fight them. No less great is the modest memorial in Port Robinson just outside the Port Robinson volunteer fire hall. It's oh, so modest, but oh, so grand nonetheless. Similarly, legionnaires and veterans, their children and grandchildren and, yes, great-grandchildren march from the Merriton Legion Hall to the Merriton cenotaph.

I want to go one further, Mr Beaubien. I believe we should embark on a province-wide campaign to give those communities that want to upgrade their memorials the resources to permit them to upgrade and update their memorials: those cairns, those cenotaphs, those monuments. I believe taxpayers in this province, and I'm one of them just like everybody else, would be pleased to see some small amount of their tax dollars invested in these permanent commemorations of the courage, dedication and sacrifice of decades and generations of young Canadians who have served their country and humankind.

As we debate this, let's all commit ourselves to ensuring that we as taxpayers guarantee that our armed forces personnel today, in the year 2003, have the resources and tools to safely and effectively do the dangerous jobs they're called upon to do. Let's stop sending our Canadian military personnel into some of the most dangerous places in the world with broken tools and inadequate resources. I believe Canadians support that proposition as well.

I support this legislation and look forward to Mr Beaubien joining in some of the modest amendments I've suggested.

1050

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's my pleasure to compliment my friend from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. Marcel Beaubien is a friend whom I know to be very genuine and sincere, and this bill speaks very much to the traditions he emulates in his riding, paying respect to those persons who have served their country and brought honour to their communities, their families and indeed their country. I want to put on the record very clearly that this speaks directly to the kind of person the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex really is. In fact, it speaks to almost all the members in the House here, I would put to you.

It's personal. When I read the explanatory note to Bill 54, it said it all. I'll read it for the record.

“The bill amends the Ministry of Citizenship and Culture Act to require the ministry to establish a program to provide information, upon request, to a municipality or a charitable institution about constructing a memorial to honour persons who are or were residents of Ontario and who served in the armed services of Canada in any wars outside Canada during the 20th century. If a body constructs such a memorial, the ministry is required to

remit a scroll of recognition to those persons whom the memorial honours and who the ministry considers come within the description of persons who may properly be honoured."

It's the persons who did survive and whose lives were altered. In many cases, you could speak to members who are older—our parents, our grandparents and relatives. I think of how I view the world in my own experience. In closest proximity, I guess, would be my son, Erin Michael O'Toole, who was a captain in the armed forces until just recently. I think he gets his Canadian decoration, having served as a captain on the Sea King helicopters. He did spend time—not in helicopters, but certainly when he was training as a navigator—on the Hercules, I believe, flying into Bosnia. I have pictures that were taken by some of his friends which really drove home for me the risk to the young men and women on the Sea Kings whom we see in our newscasts, unfortunately, and the other persons serving our country with some degree of risk to themselves.

It also brings me back in a personal way to the formation that many of those people develop in their service to country. I believe Mr Beaubien talked of his father, and I reflected back to my family as well, both on my mother's and my father's side, and how that formation in serving their country and the discipline involved in that affected their lives, mostly positively, but also I'm sure they've had memories and nightmares etc of their time.

Clare Driscoll rose to become a contributor in his community. He was my uncle and has since passed away. He served in the navy. Ray Driscoll also served the public. In fact, I think I spoke at some length here upon his death. He rose to be reeve and warden and served the county of Peterborough and Otonabee township with some distinction, and indeed served the province on the Good Roads and other committees that were important at that time.

I also think of my other uncle on my O'Toole side, Alphonse O'Toole, who was quite a brilliant fellow. I believe he got his PhD from the University of Toronto. In fact, he was a professor. I think he was in the military before he got his PhD. I'm not sure about the sequence there, but he went on to publish several books. I think the discipline or the sense of responsibility to community, giving service to others and to the country, is really what carried him further to make a contribution. Frank O'Toole, who was the first, I think, in George Brown College, also was a teacher. I'm not sure if he was a PhD, but I think he was president or at least in senior management at George Brown College. He also served his country in the military, as an officer.

The point I'm making is that all these people went on for the most part, in a voluntary sense or in a role of community, to serve their country in a broader sense—not necessarily in a military sense but in a public role. My father himself did not serve. I think he had, as I've described, brothers who did. When he passed away, my mother married a fellow who—actually, one of his legs was blown off in Italy, I think. He was a remarkable guy,

with the courage of life. Jack Condon was his name. Marcel, he didn't lose his life, and therefore he's not mentioned at one of the Remembrance Day celebrations where they read out the scroll of those who gave their lives. I would not in any respect diminish the importance of that contribution, but the others, specifically Jack Condon, I'm sure had nightmares. In fact, I remember him telling me once that he always felt that his leg was still there, even though it had been blown off by a grenade or a land mine or something. It certainly affected his life in a real sense, and the others I've described as well.

In my area, I know there was a huge contribution to the Juno Beach memorial. The province's original contribution—I was talking to people—was going to be \$100,000 or something like that. On the day of the announcement, Premier Eves changed it to \$1 million. He was so moved—and this is quite a genuine story—that he changed that amount to \$1 million, because it reflected the contribution of Canadians, and the majority came from Ontario, who contributed not just to D-Day but to the defence of freedom and democracy in the world.

All who served should be recognized, be memorialized. I support the member's bill, and I think all of us should take the time to reflect, not just on November 11. As we give our public service and have our names on a plaque someplace in this building, I think the others who have served this country should as well.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): I want to compliment the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex for his bill. I think this is one of those non-partisan bills that everyone should support. I was a little disappointed that a couple of members opposite decided to make a political speech on a bill such as this, which should be totally non-partisan.

My own father is a veteran of the Second World War. A number of my friends' fathers also fought in the Second World War. Some of them did not come home. A number of friends' fathers fought in the Korean War, and some of them did not come home. There are innumerable instances of this throughout the country, throughout the province, of people my age who grew up fatherless. A number of others of us of course view our fathers, even though they came home, as heroes.

There are municipalities throughout the province that, for one reason or another, have not put together a memorial of any type to the veterans who fought in the wars, whether it be the First World War, the Second World War or the Korean War. I heartily commend the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex for having put together this bill in honour of these people.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex has two minutes to respond.

Mr Beaubien: First of all, I would like to thank Gert McClure for giving the idea to introduce this bill. I certainly appreciate that. I would also like to thank the members from Scarborough-Agincourt, Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, St Catharines, Sault Ste Marie, Niagara Centre, Durham and Kitchener Centre, who spoke on this particular bill.

A couple of comments. The member from Sault Ste Marie mentioned the government enforcing regulations with regard to lotteries in the Legion. I think if you check the record, member for Sault Ste Marie, you'll find that the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex has been working diligently and very aggressively with regard to this. I do agree with you that tightening up the regulations on lotteries and Legions is somewhat ludicrous at this point in time.

1100

With some of the comments from the member for Niagara Centre, he was not here when I started my presentation. However, I did ask for input from different members. With regard to his comments about upgrading the existing memorials or cenotaphs across the province, whereby the provincial government would provide some help, I certainly would support that. I know that once you introduce a private member's bill that you're not supposed to expend government funds, but if the government saw fit to provide the funds somewhere in the future with regard to upgrading memorials or cenotaphs in the province, I certainly would be in support of that.

For almost 60 years we have benefited from the peace and freedom these soldiers earned with their sweat, bought with their blood, and some of them paid with their lives.

In closing, I think we should never forget the ultimate price paid for our freedoms and beliefs that we sometimes take for granted. I would like to remind all the young people, and certainly older people, in the province and across the country that freedom is not free.

The Acting Speaker: This concludes the time allocated for debate on this ballot item.

PUBLIC SECTOR
ENERGY EFFICIENCY ACT, 2003
LOI DE 2003 SUR L'EFFICACITÉ
ÉNERGÉTIQUE DU SECTEUR PUBLIC

Mr Cordiano moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 87, An Act to require that public sector organizations conduct an energy audit, submit an energy efficiency plan and implement the plan / *Projet de loi 87, Loi exigeant que les organismes du secteur public fassent une analyse énergétique et soumettent et mettent en oeuvre un plan d'efficacité énergétique.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): The member has up 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston): This bill is a straightforward bill that requires that public sector organizations conduct energy audits, that they submit energy efficiency plans to the Minister of Energy for approval and that they implement these plans within a year after submitting them.

I believe that this is of vital importance to the province of Ontario. At the present time, we face dire circumstance and a real crisis when it comes to electricity in

Ontario. We've gone through a major crisis over the last year. We continue to go through that, and I believe the time has come for the government to act, to bring about a conservation program. This bill attempts to do just that with the public sector and the broader public sector: schools, hospitals, universities, any transfer recipient from the province of Ontario; it would require them to submit these plans and to implement them.

The bill essentially does five things: first, it will conserve energy and thus reduce the demand for energy; second, it will save money by reducing operating costs; third, it will cut down on the need for additional power or additional energy sources; fourth, it will cut down on dirty emissions and help the environment; finally, fifth, it will help to support an emerging alternative energy industry and also an industry that would support energy efficiency. That would increase employment as well.

This bill would do a number of beneficial things for the province. This bill stems from the recommendations made by the select committee on alternative fuel sources. In the committee's report, recommendation 50:

"The Ontario government shall establish commitments and targets for alternative fuel/energy, including energy efficiency and conservation for universities/community colleges, public and separate schools, and the hospital/health care sector. Energy plans for individual institutions shall be prepared and shall include targets for alternative fuel/energy use and/or energy efficiency and conservation measures by December 31, 2003."

Isn't that interesting? I say to the government, the time is running out. Here we are, June 19, and there's very little action on the part of the government. Apart from some vague reference in the throne speech that the government would initiate conservation programs for the public and broader public sector and consumers, there is no bill that's been put forward by the government, there isn't an initiative that's been announced by Management Board with regard to the broader public sector and, furthermore, in the budget itself that was brought down by this government there is very little initiative shown on the part of the government to substantiate that commitment in the throne speech.

That's why I believe this bill is necessary. This bill, as I say, will get us going in the direction of conservation. What better place to start than with the public sector organizations that the government is directly controlling, directly mandating, and, furthermore, the broader public sector, school boards, hospitals and the like, transfer recipients? I believe it's absolutely critical that we begin this process. Again, the select committee on alternative fuel sources recommended that the government put this in place by the end of this year. The government is not moving on that front. I don't understand why, but this bill is required as a result of the lack of government initiative.

It's important to note that in the state of California, for example, they were able to reduce consumption by 9% in the first year after they implemented a conservation strategy—a tremendous saving, 9%. What that means for Ontario, for example: if we were able to reduce con-

sumption of our electricity demand by 9%, that amounts to the reduction and the elimination of two coal-burning power plants the size of Lakeview. That is a tremendous saving.

When you look at peak demand in Ontario in August of last year, it was at approximately 25,000 megawatts of electrical power that was used a peak demand in Ontario. If we were to take 10% of that, it's about 2,500 megawatts of power. Lakeview generates, at peak demand, about 1,200 megawatts of power. So by reducing consumption by 10% in Ontario we would eliminate two coal-burning plants the size of Lakeview. That is an astounding figure and it's data that would really help the environment.

We know that the coal-burning plants are producing toxic emissions that contribute to smog in this province. Last year we had, I believe, a minimum of 37 smog days in the GTA in southern Ontario. That is causing untold damage to our economy and to the health of the people of this province. The asthma rates for children have gone up dramatically. It is just unacceptable that in Ontario today we continue to burn these dirty coal-fired plants at the rate at which we have to burn them. That is because we don't have the additional supply, and it's very critical that we begin by reducing consumption through conservation.

1110

As I say, it is a dramatic impact that we can have in terms of the reduction that we can bring about by simply conserving. There are many examples of this in other jurisdictions. In the state of Iowa, for example, they brought about energy efficiency plans in public schools and they were able to save about \$12 million a year through their program. Texas, of all places, is also saving \$5 million a year with regard to the reductions in energy consumption they brought about in their school system. Right here in Canada we have the city of Windsor, which saved \$2 million over five years by bringing about energy efficiency programs. They reduced carbon dioxide emissions by 6,500 tonnes annually—astounding reductions. Yet here in the province of Ontario, we lag behind with respect to the broader public sector and the government ministries under the control of Management Board, the buildings that we use.

The Sooke school district in British Columbia undertook a performance contract—and I want to talk about this for just a moment. I believe we could use performance contracts to effect these changes. I also believe the government of Ontario needs to provide some incentives by way of capital funding. I couldn't put that in my bill today because it is a private member's bill and it would call for the expenditure of funds. But through regulation, the Minister of Energy and Management Board should bring about an incentive program, should put together a capital fund to ensure that this is taking place and that the broader public sector has access to the initial capital investment that might be required.

In conclusion, as I've said, this bill brings about a huge number of benefits. It is time for Ontario to act, to

begin a conservation strategy. It is time for Ontario to act with respect to the broader public sector and the public sector. I think members should support this bill.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford):

I'm very pleased to join in the debate with respect to ballot item number 16, which is the second reading of Bill 87, An Act to require that public sector organizations conduct an energy audit, submit an energy efficiency plan and implement the plan, by the honourable member Mr Cordiano.

I'd like to say that from our government's perspective, and on behalf of all of the members on this side of Legislature, conservation and energy efficiency form a major component of our energy policy. In fact, it's so much a cornerstone that Bill 87 is redundant and would appear to add little to programs and legislation this government has already put in place. Whether it would be proposals in the recent budget or programs put in place by the Minister of Energy, this government has an impressive record on conservation and efficiency.

Let's start with the Energy Efficiency Act. The province has in place minimum efficiency levels for 54 residential, commercial and industrial products and appliances. This program alone has resulted in energy savings in excess of \$250 million and has saved enough energy to meet the electricity needs of Windsor and London for an entire year.

The government is leading by example. We are taking actions that will reduce our own consumption in all our facilities by 10%. Management Board of Cabinet will look for ways to construct buildings that are energy self-sufficient using alternative or clean sources of energy. Last fall we passed the Electricity Pricing, Conservation and Supply Act, 2002, which outlines a number of impressive efficiency measures. This act strengthened the Ontario Energy Board's mandate and made it have a greater role in promoting conservation, energy efficiency and load management.

We also created a sales tax rebate for consumers who buy certain high-efficiency appliances. This program has enjoyed tremendous success so far, and we've had over 55,000 applications for the rebate. In fact, counting only the approximately 36,000 rebate applications that have been processed to date, the appliances that those applications represent have saved enough power to equal the total annual power consumed by 4,000 homes—a staggering step forward.

The Minister of Finance is putting the final touches on new regulations for tax incentives that will encourage energy conservation, including allowing new investments in qualifying electrical energy-efficients to be eligible for a 100% tax write-off in the year of acquisition. This will encourage large power users to take steps to lower their demand.

We also announced that we would create a task force on conservation and supply which will, first, provide an action plan outlining ways to attract new generation and identifying mechanisms for demand-side management. The plan will be based on the principles of security of

supply, adequacy, affordability, reliability, environmental soundness and the competitiveness of the Ontario economy. Second, it will identify any barriers to the development of long-term electricity supply and conservation and recommend solutions. Third, it will make recommendations on how to enhance the reliability and responsiveness of Ontario's electricity grid. Last, it will ensure that all electricity stakeholders have input into the process by organizing two-day-long consultations, one on new supply and another on conservation.

My colleague the Minister of Energy recently directed the Ontario Energy Board to consult with stakeholders on an appropriate demand-side management framework for Ontario's electricity market and report back to him with recommendations. The minister has asked the Ontario Energy Board to identify and review options for the delivery of demand-side management and demand response activities. He also asked the Ontario Energy Board to look at the role local distribution companies and other groups, such as the Independent Electricity Market Operator, can play in demand-side management.

Finally, the budget announced last March committed the government to provide consumers more information on saving energy. It committed the government to providing incentives to get energy-efficient products into homes of consumers who want them. It also commits the government to developing an integrated conservation strategy that includes the government, public sector groups and consumers.

I'm proud of this government's conservation efficiency efforts. While we support the goals of Bill 87, I want it to be absolutely clear that this government has already taken decisive action to protect the environment, help consumers and reduce energy consumption. We believe in the policies and programs we have put in place and we believe our record on conservation and energy efficiency speaks for itself.

I also want to comment on a few other areas. Conservation and energy efficiency go hand in hand with alternative energy and green power, and this government takes a back seat to no one in these areas. Bills such as Bill 87 are well-intentioned, but why weren't these policies allowed to surface when either of the parties opposite was in government? Why are they coming out now? I suspect it's because they looked at our record and decided it was time to join the parade.

We're the first government to do more than just talk about clean energy and conservation. In the year 2005—no later than April 1, 2005, in fact—the Lakeview coal generating plant, west of Toronto, will stop producing power based on the consumption of coal. We've made the unprecedented commitment to shut down all the province's coal-fired facilities no later than the year 2015.

I think it has to be stressed that it's not just a date picked out of the air. We've said that, hand in hand with the creation of new renewable power generation across Ontario, we will, coincidentally, shut down the dirtiest existing forms of energy generation, namely the coal-

fired plants. We are not going to leave people out in the cold, though. The renewable power comes first, before you pull the plug on the coal plants.

1120

We know that the provincial government itself is a very large user of electricity, so we think it's important to lead by example and make a commitment that 20% of the power we use, not just in this building but in all government agencies and in all the offices across Ontario, will come from new green sources of power. As well, we will reduce our consumption by 10%. That will be an impressive amount, when you consider the number of offices and other facilities the government operates.

Our recent budget included proposals such as 10-year tax holidays, unprecedented anywhere in North America. The provincial government has basically walked away from any form of revenue from new green power generation for 10 years.

Not only have we said that the generator will pay no income tax, but there will be no increase in the property tax, no increase in the capital tax, a full rebate of the sales tax and an opportunity to take a 100% write-off of any investment in the year that investment is made. My colleague the Minister of Finance is just putting the final touches on these regulations.

We've already instituted a sales tax rebate that would give consumers a full rebate of all the Ontario sales tax if they purchased either a solar thermal or a solar photovoltaic energy system.

We've gone further down the road to conservation by coming up with a rebate program that will return your provincial sales tax if you buy an Energy Star appliance: a washer, a dryer, a dishwasher or a freezer. So far, we've had over 50,000 applications for that rebate. If you add up all the energy savings from only the 36,000 applications processed so far, it's the same as the annual use in 4,000 homes.

It was this government that made it possible for the wind turbine down on the waterfront here in Toronto, the wind turbine in Pickering and the Huron wind farm on the shores of Lake Huron to be built.

It was this government that pledged to allow people who want to install their own renewable electricity generation systems to take advantage of net metering.

It was this government that put in place a system where Ontario Power Generation and other generators can now market green power to their customers.

Both parties on the other side had their chance but, while they talk a good game, our actions speak for themselves.

It was this government that announced plans that will make Ontario the leader in clean energy technologies. To do that, we have undertaken to invest \$20 million to create a centre of excellence for electricity and alternative energy technology in a total of five universities.

I'm extremely excited at the opportunity that gives us the ability to attract some of the leading-edge pure research to take us beyond even the technical innovations that have already happened in the renewable energy field

into an even more promising and even more affordable renewable power future.

As my colleague the Commissioner of Alternative Energy noted the other day, other companies are lining up to build wind farms, new photovoltaic manufacturers have been created, and this was all because our government put in place policies that allowed it to take place.

My colleague The Minister of Energy recently directed the Ontario Energy Board to consult with stakeholders on an appropriate demand-side management framework for Ontario's electricity market and report back to him with recommendations. The minister has asked the OEB to identify and review options for the delivery of demand-side management and demand response activities. He also asked the OEB to look at the role local distribution companies and other groups, such as the Independent Electricity Market Operator, can play in demand-side management.

I could go on, but I know that my time is limited. Let me conclude by saying that I take great pride in this government's record on energy efficiency and conservation, both the actions we have taken to date and the commitments we have made for the future.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): It's highly irregular and improper, but I have been asked to introduce Joy Cox in the members' east gallery. Joy comes from Leeds-Grenville and is the mom of Bryant, to my left.

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): Before I start I would like to introduce a gentleman with me today, Ted Belyea, from my riding, whom I had the pleasure of working with for 25 years. An incredible individual is here to see how democracy works, and I hope we don't disappoint him.

It is a pleasure to speak to this bill, and I don't think it's a coincidence that representing the Liberal Party today will be the member for St Catharines and myself, both of whom have had the pleasure and privilege of being on the select committee on alternative fuel sources, a good committee that I think produced a fine report that is now occupying spaces on top shelves in a number of government offices.

There were quite a number of other recommendations that should have been brought forward out of it, so I applaud the member for York South-Weston for bringing this forward. It was a unanimous report, and I'm disappointed in how little action the government has taken on the recommendations for it. But this is certainly an excellent one to get started.

I think it's maybe a little bit ironic or coincidence that I learned that this very day within Whitby they are experiencing about the second-worst power outages that they ever have. Rumour has it that the heavy drain on power may actually be that there's a printing firm there that's producing government brochures to distribute across the province, and we don't have enough electricity in the system to actually keep all of those presses running. So if you fellows would slow down a little bit on that—there's no need to send the same brochure three or

four times to each house. If you'd back off, we'd save on trees, we'd save our forest. Just a suggestion.

Interjection: And frustration would diminish.

Mr Parsons: Yes.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): You have nothing more to say except spurious comments.

Mr Parsons: Don't. That's hurtful. That hurts.

Interjections.

Mr Parsons: OK. Don't wave at me.

The government record, seriously, on energy is probably as dismal as one would find in North America, if not the world. One need only read the newspapers over the past years, if you had the light on in the house so that you could read the newspaper. But over the last year we have had a lurching series of energy crises, lacking direction. The apparent solution to it was to impose a freeze of 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour. So everybody is happy; 4.3 cents is not much to pay for electricity. Indeed, with the wonderful unveiling of it, at a house where the homeowner said, "Now I can turn on my Christmas lights," certainly the appearance was that electricity was so cheap we can do anything we want with it.

However, I would say to the people of Ontario, take the amount of energy that you use and work that in relation to your total bill, and you're not paying 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour; you're paying eight cents, nine cents, 10 cents a kilowatt hour. The delivery charges were also frozen, and they were frozen at the highest rate in history. So the 4.3-cent announcement actually I think psychologically has caused people to increase their power usage, now that it's so cheap, and has been detrimental to conservation rather than encouraging conservation. It is a unique commodity: we can't store it; we can't save it overnight. We have a huge surplus of electricity at 2 o'clock in the morning, a shortage in the afternoon.

Interjection.

Mr Parsons: I'm just going on what I was told by people on the other side, but we have more electricity than we require at 2 o'clock in the morning. In fact, I would suggest from a conservation viewpoint that it would behoove the government to consider establishing a program. So many people do their dinner in the late afternoon, after using the stove and high energy consumption, put the dishes in the dishwasher and turn it on. Under the current system that this government has, they're going to pay the same price per kilowatt hour at 6 o'clock in the afternoon as they would have paid at 3 o'clock in the morning. Surely there should be some system put together that would give an incentive. Certainly we can have timers that would have the dishwasher kick on at 3 o'clock in the morning, when we don't have the energy crisis that we do. But we need to encourage people, and we need to encourage them with carrots.

This member's bill provides for, first of all, finding out where the government buildings can reduce their energy consumption—absolutely wonderful concept. The question has been asked, why didn't it do it earlier? We didn't have an energy crisis 10 years ago. It simply wasn't an issue, because we had a Hydro that was able to

provide safe, cheap, reliable power. Now we've seen in the last couple of years, where we're into the crisis, that something has to happen. The member for York South-Weston has done that.

It also means the government must not just do a study on the buildings, as they did on the alternative fuels. They have to accept that there has to be some upfront money to produce the energy savings to produce the long-term savings for it.

I'm concerned that they don't act on it. This government seems to think that once we talk about an issue, we're going to do an audit and whatever, well, the issue is solved in the public's mind, when in fact it isn't. You have to implement the recommendations of a report before you can be assured of any cost savings out of it.

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With the current electricity situation—we've got issues with oil and natural gas—it became apparent from the select committee that we don't have unlimited resources as it relates to natural gas; and with oil, we are probably, within the world, reaching the limit of cheap oil, oil that's easy to access, oil that's easy to extract and process. We are probably moving into an era where we're looking at expensive oil—oil from underneath the ocean, oil from the Arctic—that will still be there for our generation but will be much more expensive to obtain. So there are all kinds of motives to decrease our demand on those fuels.

Unfortunately, probably the fuel we have the largest access to that is incredibly cheap is coal. I know the government is committed to shutting down the coal plants in 2015, but we put that in the perspective of the medical community telling us that about 1,200 people die prematurely in Ontario every year because of the effects of pollution from coal plants. So from now to 2015, an awful lot of individuals and families will pay a severe price for our reliance on coal.

I applaud Dalton McGuinty for his commitment to 2007. Our leader would like to shut them down today, but realistically we know we have to find alternative energy sources for it, but there's a profound difference between 2007 and 2015 when we take those eight years and multiply them by 1,200 premature deaths each year. The government could do better. They could do it much faster than they are.

Green energy: I note one of the platforms of the government is to produce savings for companies that want to use green energy, such as windmills, but I find it kind of funny that one of your commitments is that there will be no increase in property tax. That's not going to cost you a penny. That's a great promise. You're saying you're going to let somebody else go without the revenue from it. That's downloading on to municipalities, so please don't take credit for it.

This bill is a good bill that will certainly help to reduce the supply and save it for our children, our grandchildren and future generations.

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I want to welcome Edie

Thurston's class from V.K. Greer Public School in Utterson, in the riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka, that is visiting today in the west public gallery. This is one of many trips they have done down to Queen's Park.

Mr Cordiano: Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I believe the clock was running against our time. You should probably add a little more time to it.

The Deputy Speaker: I'll make sure that gets corrected.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I'm pleased to speak on this piece of private members' public business this morning. This may be a worthwhile idea, but without aggressive financial incentives, the plan will fail to achieve serious energy efficiency savings. However, it doesn't mean we won't support it, because to send a message to the government that something needs to be done—they are doing absolutely nothing—is really important today and as we move toward an election.

As the member, Mr Cordiano, rightfully suggests in bringing it forward, this is an Achilles heel of this government's. It talks a good line but it really delivers very little. There are no targets set and no money, so this could amount to little more than filling out forms and implementing small changes.

Broader public sector organizations need help. This government's cutbacks have left them little room to manoeuvre. The NDP's Public Power, Practical Solutions book has in it a program called Efficiency Ontario which will provide \$300 million per year in energy efficiency incentives so that deeper cuts can be achieved.

Just a little background on the bill. Every organization with the majority of members of its board appointed by or under the authority of cabinet or a cabinet minister, plus all municipalities, hospitals, universities, colleges and corporations owned at least 90% by a public or broader public sector organization and other BPS institutions will be required to submit an energy efficiency plan to the minister within one year of the coming into force of the relevant section of this bill.

The plan must include an energy audit and describe proposed energy efficiency changes as well as projected costs and savings.

The plan must be approved by the governing body of the organization.

If an organization ceases to be a public sector organization during the period in question, it does not have to prepare a plan. The overly suspicious might suggest that a privatization agenda is afoot here.

The minister can ask for repeated alterations to the plan before it is approved.

"Within one year after the energy efficiency plan is approved by the minister, the public sector organization shall implement the plan." It is unclear from this sentence whether the entire plan must be implemented within one year, which may be impractical.

The minister can designate or exempt public sector organizations.

Having said that and put on the record some of our concerns, support for any initiative that will promote and

move forward an energy efficiency agenda out of this place is good. We as New Democrats are saying, in contrast to both this bill and the lack of anything of substance coming forward from the government, that by the end of a New Democrat government's first term, Efficiency Ontario will reduce electricity demand by some 3,500 megawatts. That's the equivalent of the entire Darlington nuclear station. This represents the same percentage of electricity demand as California saved through their conservation in 2001. For an Ontario family with an electricity bill of \$1,200 and a gas bill of \$1,200, this would represent a saving of some \$360. That's a significant saving, particularly for the many, many citizens in this province today experiencing the significantly rising prices of energy in communities like Wawa and Echo Bay and Thessalon and Elliot Lake and Sault Ste Marie. This is significant money, particularly for people on fixed incomes who have no room to manoeuvre.

California instituted a 20/20 program in the spring of 2001 in order to prevent blackouts. The program was continued in 2002. Consumers who reduced electricity consumption by 20% got a further discount of 20% on the energy portion of their bill. About one third of residential consumers qualified by achieving the required energy savings, so it can be done. The 20/20 program was part of an extensive conservation strategy that saved the state over 5,700 megawatts, or 14% of its peak summer electricity consumption, thereby preventing blackouts. Community-based public education efforts, including a public conservation campaign called Flex Your Power, were also an important part of the package. According to a report done for the California state auditor, California's efforts cost three cents per kilowatt hour, or 4.2 cents Canadian, substantially less than the cost of new generating capacity.

This Efficiency Ontario project is of course consistent with some of the programs we were delivering between 1990 and 1995 when we were the government. We talk about home green-ups. Home energy audits have long been an excellent way of assisting homeowners with energy conservation. These measures can include such things as basement wall insulation, energy-efficient windows and proper caulking and sealing. The NDP government's green communities program, a program we had available when we were government that was slashed almost immediately when the Conservatives took over in 1995, made these audits available free to the public. I actually had one done on my own home, I remember, and we're still doing some of the things that were suggested by that group to reduce our energy costs. It is important. Our kids actually bought into that as well. The Conservatives cancelled the program, but many of the community groups carried on. Audits were no longer free, and few, if any, other incentives were available.

A recent pilot project in Peterborough, sponsored by the Ontario Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources Canada, found that without incentives, audited homeowners only undertook about 5% of the recom-

mended improvements. This is where we think the lack of any reference to financial support or incentives in the bill that we're discussing here today is a real shortfall in the proposal. With an \$800 incentive covering about 25% of the total cost, however, the ratio increased to over 40%.

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So without the incentives, we had a 5% take-up of the suggestions made through these audits. With an \$800 incentive covering about 25% of the total cost, the number of people taking advantage of that program rose to over 40%. Efficiency Ontario will be able to provide significant incentives. That's why we're talking about the kind of money that we are.

According to the Suzuki Foundation, the kinds of building envelope retrofits facilitated by home energy audits lead to significant savings in both heating and air conditioning, which of course are the two big consumers of energy these days; that which we focus on so readily in the winter, heating, and in the summer, air conditioning, as we deal with some of the shortfall in energy supply we see in the province today.

There will be big savings potential in commercial and industrial buildings as well, we think. The Mountain Equipment Co-op on King Street in Toronto has saved 40%, compared to the energy costs of the average building. The city of Toronto has had great success with its program retrofitting commercial, institutional and multi-unit residential buildings for big energy savings.

The New Democrat government began switching public housing buildings away from electric heat to natural gas and improving building insulation. That kind of approach, that kind of initiative, will be restarted under our proposal, included in the Public Power: Practical Solutions for Ontario document we are taking out and around the province these days as we move closer and closer to an election in this jurisdiction.

The Conservatives are offering a rebate on provincial sales tax for new energy-efficient appliances. Unfortunately, this has only been enough to entice 3,200 consumers to tap into the program.

A program of interest-free loans would help more consumers exchange their old refrigerators or air conditioners for new energy-efficient models. Of course, that's part of our program as well and part of what we did when we were in government.

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): A free beer fridge program.

Mr Martin: Well, whatever. You can call it what you like, but if it works, it works. If people take it up and do it, then it's effective. That's what we're saying.

For example, many older refrigerators like those beer refrigerators that many people have in their basements consume 900 kilowatt hours of electricity per year. The most efficient new ones use around 200 kilowatt hours. Switching would save a homeowner \$77 a year. So we're talking about some pretty serious, significant money here.

We talk about saving \$360 a year by making sure your home is energy-efficient in terms of insulation, doors,

windows and those kinds of things. Also included in that would be efforts by residents in homes and buildings to do things like turning off water, turning out lights and bringing in automatic turnoffs of those utilities.

You add that \$360 to the \$77 a year that we feel people could save by turning in some of their old refrigerators or other appliances, like air conditioners, and we're talking about over \$400 a year in savings. As I said before, that's a lot of money, particularly for somebody on a fixed income.

So we think this bill before us today is certainly a good signal to be sending out to the people of Ontario and to this government. It's something that we think is worth supporting, and we will support it at the end of the morning here. We congratulate Mr Cordiano for bringing it forward. However, as I've stated, we think it doesn't go far enough in that there isn't identified in this—although I know in bringing forward a private member's public bill you have to be careful that you're not calling on the government to spend money, because that would disqualify the bill and perhaps that's some of why he hasn't gone a little bit further than he has in identifying money that should be made available to induce people to want to take up some of the incentive that's here.

But we think it's really important, and it's unfortunate that the government itself isn't putting out some detailed program or plan to take us down that road as well. But then, it shouldn't surprise us, because as we look at what's happening out there today in the energy field and we see the damage that's being done to communities, to business and industry and to individuals across the province, no less than in places like Wawa and Dubreuilville and White River, where I, with my colleague from Timmins-James Bay, was this past week and the insensitivity, it seems, or the lack of interest or whatever it is—last night I used the term, "Nero fiddled while Rome burned." We have a government with Mr Baird, the energy minister, and the Premier saying, "We're looking at it. We're concerned. We're going to do something," yet every day that goes by, another business closes down, another industry lays off people, people on fixed incomes have to get out of their homes and move into smaller accommodation in many of these communities, and they will never return. Once you go into bankruptcy, once you leave a business, once you lay off hundreds of people in an industry, it's really, really difficult to turn that around. So those communities will lose those enterprises for good.

Places like Wawa, White River and Dubreuilville, which depend on one industry for their livelihood, can't afford that—as is happening in White River: if Domtar closes the mill, it's the only industry in town of any real consequence that takes them through all the seasons—gone. Over 300 people are out of work, unemployment insurance will only last so long, and then those folks have to look at something else. In most instances, they will leave town and they will take with them the tax base that the municipality needs to continue to support and build the infrastructure.

As these communities make overtures to the government, it seems to be falling on deaf ears, because nobody will come up, nobody will meet with them. A week ago Thursday, today, there was a meeting in Manitouwadge, where it was suggested an interministerial task force be set up—no response from the government yet on that. I suggest that this morning we'll probably find that they'll vote against this bill as well.

Mr O'Toole: I'm pleased to rise and address the member from York South-Weston's Bill 87. As I understand it, really, I can't stand here and oppose it, because I think anyone here should be in favour of supporting conservation, for all the right reasons: for the Kyoto emissions and all the other reasons that we should be supporting conservation. It's the right thing to do. In fact, I suspect if you looked at the price of energy in the marketplace, I suppose we should have a policy that reflects conservation. In other words, if you were paying market price, you'd probably be using less electricity.

I think what's wrong in the marketplace, actually, is that some of the right tools aren't in place. If we had time-of-rate metering, people could be rewarded for using the clothes dryer late at night. But as it stands today, you pay a flat rate, and that flat rate isn't adjusted for the time of day that you use it. So your bill is sort of averaged, unfortunately. But I think the government is taking steps to introduce the time-of-rate metering. In fact, I believe you'll see with the strengthened role of the Ontario Energy Board in Bill 23 that it will mandate many of these things.

This government really believes that it's important to lead by example. I think really if you looked at the government's April throne speech, they made a number of commitments, one of which was to start with themselves, to reduce their own consumption by 10%. This would extend, of course, to the broader public sector, and of course that, in the preamble, is much of what Mr Cordiano is talking about. So I don't really disagree.

I think it's just good management. The fact of setting up a whole regime to review these energy audit plans—I think there will be a lot more bureaucrats all making \$100,000 a year.

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I think the school boards and other public sector partners have the resources today—in fact, have been. When I was a school trustee, many of the boards were introducing energy-efficient light bulbs, lighting systems and heating systems to save money. In fact, I would just strengthen that and perhaps reward them for doing it themselves, as opposed to allowing the ministry. But, substantively, I think the government is on the right track in its energy plan. There's a rebate for people purchasing energy efficient appliances.

Just one more comment: one of the earlier speakers said something I don't agree with: that there is no way to save electrons; that when you generate electricity, you've got to use it. Well, if you look to the future of the use of hydrogen and other mechanisms for storing energy, I think you'll see a lot of new responses to levelling the

peak load on our system. In fact, rather than building new generation capacity, we should be looking at ways to store existing capacity when it's not being used.

From this side of the House, I believe we'll be looking at it very carefully. Respecting the member from York South-Weston, it's an important initiative we'll be supporting on my side.

Mr Martin: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I just wanted to recognize the presence in the visitors' gallery of a school from Sault Ste Marie, St Mary French Immersion School. Welcome to Toronto.

The Deputy Speaker: Welcome to our Legislature.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I join the member in welcoming our friends from Sault Ste Marie, the home of the Soo Greyhounds and the home of a lot of very good people who were born in Sault Ste Marie. I have some relatives, in fact, who reside in Sault Ste Marie.

I want to begin by commending my colleague the member for York South-Weston, Joe Cordiano, for bringing forward this timely piece of legislation.

Those of us who served on the select committee on alternative fuel sources believe that the recommendations we found in this particular report were excellent. We were all looking forward, and I think without political affiliation interfering with it, to a timely implementation of the recommendations contained in the report. The advantage, of course, of the select committee was that, I think all members would agree, we put our partisan hats aside, worked together, did a lot of discussing, did a lot of investigating, became somewhat expert in the field of alternative fuels and came up with, I think, a good report.

The problem when you get a report of this kind is whether it's ever going to be implemented. Some recommendations, I see, are being implemented. All of us who were on the committee want to see more of those implemented, and that's why it is timely for the member for York South-Weston, Joe Cordiano, to bring forward this particular measure.

The cheapest way of dealing, I say as the Minister of Energy comes in—and he would agree—with the demand side of electricity is to reduce the demand in the first place; that is, a major conservation program. That usually happens when there's a crisis. Some will recall that back in 1973, when there was a boycott on oil from the Middle East, there was a great effort made then to reduce the consumption of gasoline and oil products, and there was a reduction in consumption as a result. That was driven by a boycott, driven by highly escalating prices.

The member for York South-Weston is saying we can do that without a crisis. We simply have to anticipate and recognize that we have to implement a major, comprehensive, extensive conservation program in this province to reduce electricity consumption, particularly so that in the peak hours in the summer, when air conditioners are going and there's a great demand, and in the winter, when furnaces are going and there's a great demand, we will not have a crisis of supply; but also that we will be able to simply make all of us more efficient.

The suggestions about what we can do within houses are important, within industry. There were some good programs—the member for Sault Ste Marie made reference to this—in the late 1980s and the early 1990s, which unfortunately were terminated when the government got into cost-cutting measures after being elected in 1995. As a result, we've lost eight years of potential progress in energy conservation.

We have to recognize as well that the member has said he wants to see a reduction in the demand for electricity produced by coal-fired plants. I remember reading last July the edition of the *Economist*—certainly not what would be known as an environmental magazine—and on the cover it said, "Environmental enemy No 1"—coal. We recognize that it produces sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxide and a number of other toxic substances which are detrimental to public health and to the health of plant life in this province. Mercury comes to mind as being a very significant one, and carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxides, as I mentioned, and sulphur dioxide.

What the member is saying in effect is, and he's gone through the detail, "Let's look at the public sector: the government of Ontario and the government of Canada, municipalities, universities, colleges, hospitals and so on. Let's have a thorough evaluation or audit of these and come forward with concrete proposals and implement proposals which would substantially reduce the electricity that is consumed in those instances," and he has provided us with some examples.

I remember reading about the city of Windsor, for instance, which has reduced by a substantial amount its consumption and has saved a lot of money. They saved \$2 million over five years and paid for the performance contract over nine years. They reduced carbon dioxide emissions by 6,500 tonnes, annually lowered emissions of nitrous oxide and methane and improved comfort, lighting and air quality in buildings, so they had greater employee productivity.

You see, it has to be done by setting the example. Those of us who had a chance to see this in other jurisdictions recognize, for instance, that solar power is one way we can do this. The Honourable Robert Welch, when he was the member for Lincoln and Brock, partially in the city of St Catharines, ensured that there was an experimental program, a pilot program at Applewood public school in the Merritton section of St Catharines to put solar panels on that school. With the advanced technology we have today, we can use a lot of solar power. It's not something that's way off in the distance, it's not something that's outlandish. It can be used now.

We have an opportunity to utilize wind power. Again, there were people who were naysayers about that. Look at the province of Alberta: the entire system of public transit in the city of Calgary is in fact fuelled by electricity produced by, notionally speaking, windmills at Pincher Creek and at other locations in Alberta.

The member has I think clearly indicated that we as a government in Ontario have a chance to show the way and to effect major reductions in the costs of energy in

this province. You can't do it simply by hoping it's going to happen. You have to have, unfortunately, whether you like it or not, a very strong comprehensive audit of your buildings, vehicles, everything within the jurisdiction of government and the greater public sector that I mentioned previously. When we do that, we'll reduce consumption. When we reduce consumption, we'll reduce the amounts of contaminants that are produced by coal-fired plants. We will save money. It'll be nice, I know, for our industries and businesses that want to be competitive to save money as well. On their bottom lines they can be more competitive, more productive and more economically viable by implementing these measures.

I want to commend the member for York South-Weston. I see no reason why any member of this House would be in opposition to this legislation. It's very forward-looking. I know his constituents will be pleased to see that he has taken the initiative to put this bill before the House for consideration.

The Deputy Speaker: The time allotted for debate has expired. I'm sorry—the member for York South-Weston has two minutes to respond.

Mr Cordiano: Very briefly, just a couple of comments. Thank you to the members who have spoken to this bill.

This bill is not intended as a comprehensive conservation strategy. It is, however, intended to get the government moving with the broader public sector and the public sector. It's about leadership. It's about the fact that this government hasn't shown that leadership with respect to the reduction and consumption of energy. If you examine the throne speech, it clearly indicates a lack of government commitment on this front. They, the Conservative Party of Ernie Eves, intend to phase out coal-fired generating plants by 2015. Well, guess what? The Liberals and Dalton McGuinty are going to do that by 2007. We can't afford to wait that long. This needs to be done immediately. My bill will enact changes that will start us in that direction.

I couldn't put other concerns about financing in the bill, calling for the expenditure of funds, since this is a private member's bill. It can't be done in private members' bills. Let me just say this: the government can do that. As well, with respect to setting targets, that can be accomplished by way of regulation. The minister can do that by enacting regulations to set those targets.

I think that any of these concerns that have been raised can be addressed in committee. I would hope that members would support this bill so that we can bring it to committee and deal with those concerns. Again, I say that it is leadership that's required on the part of this government, and they have failed miserably over the last eight years to show any kind of leadership. They have the chance to do so now. Let's move forward.

The Deputy Speaker: The time for debate has ended. Thanks for intervening, Mr Cordiano, or I might have gone right past that.

We'll deal first with ballot item 15.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND CULTURE AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE MINISTÈRE DES AFFAIRES CIVIQUES ET CULTURELLES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Mr Beaubien moved second reading of Bill 54. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

Shall the bill be referred to the committee of the whole?

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I would like the bill referred to the standing committee on general government.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed? It is agreed.
We will now deal with ballot item 16.

PUBLIC SECTOR ENERGY EFFICIENCY ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR L'EFFICACITÉ ÉNERGÉTIQUE DU SECTEUR PUBLIC

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Mr Cordiano moved second reading of Bill 87. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Shall the bill be referred to the committee of the whole?

Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston): I'd like it to go to the standing committee on general government.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed?

All those in favour will please rise and remain standing until counted by the Clerk. Thank you. Take your seats.

All those opposed will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

A majority is in favour. The bill therefore stands referred to the standing committee on general government.

The business of this morning having been completed, I do now leave the chair. The House resumes at 1:30.

The House recessed from 1204 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): I'm honoured to have the occasion today to stand before this House and express the great satisfaction that the gay and lesbian community has with Canada. I'm always a proud Canadian, but my pride was intensified to an even greater extent when, earlier this week, the federal government announced that it would not appeal but would rather move forward legislatively with a prescription that would open marriage up to gays and lesbians in this country.

I'm very, very proud always, as someone who was drawn to politics by Pierre Trudeau, to see the work he did on the Charter of Rights expressing the values that, as a Canadian, I'm very, very proud to celebrate.

I'm very proud as well of the extraordinary people who have given service to my community in advancing our move toward equality: lawyers like Martha McCarthy and Douglas Elliott, and Reverend Brent Hawkes and the congregation at the Metropolitan Community Church. I'm excited that this Friday afternoon—tomorrow—I'll have the opportunity to participate as a celebrant at a wedding involving my good friend Toronto city councillor Kyle Rae. This is an extraordinary opportunity for our community.

Canada, as the third nation in the world to allow same-sex couples to marry, is at the forefront, as we should be as a country, in acknowledging the fundamental equality of our people.

I realize this is a contentious issue and that it challenges many people's values, but I want to say that I've been extraordinarily impressed at the way all people in this debate have conducted themselves. As a Canadian I'm very proud and as a gay person, I'm extraordinarily proud to call Canada my home. I'd like to thank all three party leaders in this Legislature, who supported this initiative.

PETER GZOWSKI INVITATIONAL

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): Peter Gzowski would have been delighted with plans to pass on the torch for a tradition he began 17 years ago. It was 17 years ago when he hit the first golf ball off the tee at the Briars Golf Club to start the first Peter Gzowski Invitational. The tournament is traditionally preceded by a night of entertainment at the Red Barn Theatre. Some of Canada's top stars have performed, volunteering their time and talents for Mr Gzowski's support of the cause of literacy. One of Canada's most acclaimed writer-broadcasters, Mr Gzowski died last year, but not before leaving a legacy that has become a part of the essence of the Canadian identity.

Telling the stories of Canadians and having them able to read and write those stories was his passion. The Red Barn gala was held on Monday evening, June 9. It began with a barbecue on the lawns, followed by an evening of special performances. This year's Red Barn event was hosted by the CBC's Shelagh Rogers, while Peter Mansbridge was host and spokesperson for the golf tournament.

Anyone who attended the event received a unique literary gift, a facsimile, complete with cigarette burns and coffee stains, of Peter Gzowski's manuscript for Leacock's Smile, considered to be his best piece of writing. It is part of an exhibition by the Stephen Leacock Museum in Orillia, entitled "Beautiful Words," which includes a provocative epigram by Stephen Leacock, a writer whom Mr Gzowski greatly admired.

The Peter Gzowski library is hoping to bring the exhibition to Sutton in the near future. Thank you, Peter Gzowski, for your legacy of literacy.

THUNDER BAY EXPRESSWAY

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): Earlier this week, another major traffic accident took place on the Thunder Bay Expressway, this time at the extremely dangerous intersection of John Street and the expressway. Seven people were taken to hospital, with one person in very serious condition.

As is always the case when such an incident occurs, we naturally ask whether this accident could have been avoided. I can't say for sure, nor can I categorically tell the Minister of Transportation today that if an advance warning light system had been in place this accident would not have happened. But the fact that it might have alerted the driver cannot be denied, and it is for that reason that I once again call on the province and the minister to install lights at all the lit sections of the expressway.

Frankly, the real issue here is that what we have in Thunder Bay is a part of the Trans-Canada Highway, where speeds frequently exceed 100 kilometres an hour, interrupted by six sets of traffic lights. Does anyone in this Legislature believe for one second that such a situation would be allowed to exist on the 401? What clearly needs to happen to avoid these needless and tragic events is for the province to recognize its obligation to complete its own plan for the expressway. This is a stretch of the highway that needs overpasses and interchanges that aren't just on the drawing board, but are part of a real funding commitment with a real timeline. We've been told that the province will move forward once the northwest arterial is built. I view that as simply a cop-out. It should not be used as an excuse not to move forward on safety improvements that should have happened long ago. People in northwestern Ontario should not have to accept a different quality in terms of highway standards just because we are far from Queen's Park—certainly not when the price of that lower standard may cost us our lives.

HERITAGE MILTON

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): Throughout Ontario there are pockets of citizens committed to preserving Ontario's history for future generations. These various historical societies are staffed in large part by community volunteers who care very deeply about their communities.

In Milton we're very fortunate to have one such organization with several individuals dedicated to the preservation of the town's history. Heritage Milton was founded in 1977, with a goal of protecting and preserving the local courthouse and jail. Since that time, it has been converted into the council chambers, and the jail exercise yard is one of the prettiest gardens in town.

In September 2002, Heritage Milton celebrated its 25th anniversary with the opening of the Waldie Blacksmith Shop, a blacksmith shop sitting in Milton which was run by four generations of Waldies. This volunteer organization carries out several projects in the town of Milton aimed at education and preservation of our history.

One outstanding volunteer is 90-year-old Leonard McNeil, one of the founding members of Heritage Milton. Yesterday, at Allendale, a retirement home in Milton, Mr McNeil was presented with the Ontario Heritage Foundation award recognizing over 25 years of dedication to Heritage Milton. Through his years of service with Heritage Milton, Mr McNeil helped carry out many activities, including the implementation of the town's historical plaque program. These plaques help visitors and newcomers to our community identify buildings of historical significance. The group also preserves documents for the town of Milton archives so that we can pass along records of interest to future generations.

Halton has many remarkable citizens who are committed to preserving our culture and heritage, and we are proud of the time Mr Leonard McNeil has dedicated to the community through Heritage Milton.

HYDRO RATES

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): Finally, relief for Great Lakes Power customers. Late yesterday, Energy Minister Baird announced that rural rate assistance will apply to Great Lakes Power customers. This means that customers will receive an average reduction in their electricity bills of \$21 a month, and an average credit of \$350 to their Great Lakes Power accounts, retroactive to May 1, 2002. Obviously, people who heat with electricity or otherwise use large quantities of electricity will receive larger credits.

The rate for residential consumers will be slightly less than for Hydro One customers. This ends the blatant discrimination against Great Lakes Power customers. Further, large industrial and large commercial customers will also receive mitigation.

1340

The effects of these rates still need to be clarified, but the minister has committed to provide some clarification for me today. I want to thank the minister for his help in this endeavour. I want to thank municipal leaders, community groups and residents for supporting my campaign for rural rate assistance and rate fairness in the Great Lakes Power area.

There have been many casualties over the last 12 months. Hopefully, this means that, going forward, consumers and businesses within the Great Lakes Power area will receive rate fairness.

SUDBURY REGIONAL HOSPITAL

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): If rumours are true, the government is finally ready to deal with the

unacceptable construction delay at the Sudbury Regional Hospital. It's how this will be dealt with that greatly concerns me. Government-appointed supervisor Graham Scott says the government isn't likely to change the hospital funding formula to assume a greater percentage of the costs, so the community must raise 30% of the higher construction costs. A mortgage option seems to be on the table. A financial institution would upfront local costs and the hospital would pay mortgage payments from savings in the operating budget.

The problem is that the Sudbury Regional Hospital has an operating deficit of \$25 million and an accrued debt of \$90 million. The board has agreed to cost-cutting measures which may see the hospital break even by 2006, if all the operations are at one site by that time. If not, there's no guarantee of savings, much less the hoped-for \$7.1 million annual savings. The plan involves the elimination of 125 to 145 full-time positions.

There are no operating savings to pay mortgage payments, and there is no guarantee of any savings for some long time to come. So what will the hospital do? Cut even more programs and staff to find the money to pay the mortgage? What will that do for patient care? And what will it do on top of the 125 full-time positions the hospital has already agreed to cut by 2006?

This scheme will force the hospital to take big risks that could jeopardize patient care. It's not acceptable. The government must recognize Sudbury as a regional centre servicing northeastern Ontario, and the government should change the funding formula so the government assumes a greater cost of this share.

ELECTROVAYA

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): I am very excited to have this opportunity to recognize and applaud the achievements of Electrovaya, a remarkable high-technology company located in my riding of Mississauga South.

With Electrovaya's groundbreaking products, the era of Star Wars remote technology has indeed arrived. Last year, Electrovaya won the innovation category of the Ontario government's Global Traders Award for its SuperPolymer battery technology, which allows longer run times than any other rechargeable battery currently in production.

Electrovaya has also created the Scribbler, which is considered to be the world's most mobile tablet PC. Using the company's award-winning battery, the Scribbler can run up to 16 hours—much longer than its competition. This ingenious computer is called a Scribbler because the user can handwrite on a screen. The PC then transcribes the notations and can send them anywhere in the world via remote, wireless technology. Like the company's batteries, the Scribbler is taking the world by storm.

Today we welcome Electrovaya's president and CEO, Dr Sankar Das Gupta, and members of his family, who are in the members' gallery. I invite all members to join

me in congratulating Dr Das Gupta and ElectroVaya's vice-president and chief technology officer, Dr James Jacobs, for building a visionary company that has put Canada on the leading edge of mobile technology. This is the Scribbler.

BEEF PRODUCERS

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I rise today to plead with the Minister of Agriculture on behalf of the cattle producers and other ruminant farmers in our province. Yesterday, the bottom fell out of the market in Alberta. Cattle were trading at 50 cents. At that price, producers are losing \$700 a head. It is less than half the value of the animal. Last week, the industry was already in crisis and free-fall. This has the potential to be the nail in the coffin.

The phones in my office and other members' offices have been ringing off the hook. Beef farmers are in dire straits, in danger of losing everything, not able to hold on any longer. The federal government has announced their recovery program. We all know there are areas of contention and shortfalls with this plan. The sliding scale of compensation may not be enough to save some farmers; the timing of the wind-down of the program is problematic, as well as how to ensure equitable distribution across the country.

The feds tell me that Alberta will have applications out to their farmers tomorrow and that cheques will be flowing next week. Our farmers in this industry need money now. They cannot hold on any longer.

As a cost-shared, provincially administered program, our minister does have the authority and the option to enhance, extend or boost the program if she has to, if that is what is necessary to save the beef industry in our province. I urge this government and its Minister of Agriculture to commit to this industry that they will immediately take action, get the money into farmers' hands and do what it takes to ensure this vital industry does not disappear from the face of the province.

STEPHEN CHANDLER

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): I rise today to honour a man who has devoted 35 years to children and families; 25 of those years to the children and families of Perth county.

Stephen Chandler is the longest-serving continuous director of any children's aid society in this province and is retiring from his post as director of the Perth county children's aid society.

I had the honour of presenting Stephen with a Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal in February. That medal recognized not only his professional service to our community but his efforts with the United Way, St John's United Church and the Rotary Club.

Stephen's contributions have also been felt far outside the borders of the city of Stratford and the county of Perth. He was involved in an international exchange pro-

gram with the Zimbabwe Council for the Welfare of Children, which resulted in Project Wheelchair, a partnership between the Stratford Rotary Club and its sister club in Zimbabwe.

Unfortunately, I was unable to get to Stephen's retirement party last Friday night to tell him this in person, but on behalf of the people, and especially the children, of the riding of Perth-Middlesex, I want to thank him for his years of service. I'm sure all members of this house will join me in wishing Stephen well and letting him know that his contribution will never be forgotten.

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I ask for unanimous consent for second and third readings of Bill 100, An Act respecting the Kawartha Highlands Signature Site Park.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? I didn't hear any noes. Agreed. The member may proceed.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Who said no?

The Speaker: Did you say no?

Interjection.

The Speaker: Oh, OK. Sorry.

The minister over here needs to move second and third readings.

KAWARTHA HIGHLANDS SIGNATURE SITE PARK ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LE PARC DE LA RÉGION CARACTÉRISTIQUE DES HAUTES-TERRES DE KAWARTHA

Mr Baird moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 100, An Act respecting the Kawartha Highlands Signature Site Park / Projet de loi 100, Loi concernant le parc de la région caractéristique des Hautes-Terres de Kawartha.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

KAWARTHA HIGHLANDS SIGNATURE SITE PARK ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LE PARC DE LA RÉGION CARACTÉRISTIQUE DES HAUTES-TERRES DE KAWARTHA

Mr Baird moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 100, An Act respecting the Kawartha Highlands Signature Site Park / Projet de loi 100, Loi concernant le parc de la région caractéristique des Hautes-Terres de Kawartha.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

VISITORS

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I wonder if you and the members of the Legislature would help me in welcoming Derek, Roseanna and Amelia Redmond, who were the successful bidders on lunch with their member of Parliament in the legislative dining room today. Would you please join me in welcoming them? They're in the west gallery.

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Many in the House have met Aja Sutton, our page. I wish to draw members' attention to the members' gallery, where Aja's mother, Tara, and her grandmother, Mrs Ollie Sutton, are present.

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I rise to introduce a former member of this House, Mr Allister Johnston. He served in this place from 1948 to 1971, representing the riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka. Mr Johnston is currently in his 94th year. I welcome him back to this House.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): We welcome our honoured guest.

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: It gives me great pleasure and honour to welcome His Holiness Syedna Mohammed Burhanuddin in the members' gallery, head of Dawoodi Bohra Community worldwide, celebrating his 92nd birthday tomorrow, as well as members of the community: Amil Saheb Juzer Zakari, Shiek Hamza Najmi, Sheik Zulfikar Zakir, Sheik Aziz Dohadwala, Shiek Habib D Tawawala, Sheik Khuzeima Dohadwala, Sheik Murtaza Bhujwala, Mulla Onali Jeevanjee, Bhai Abdulhussein Alibhai, Hussein Bhutwala, and Taha Tawawala.

Tomorrow this community will be celebrating, June 20, the birthday of the Holy Prophet Mohammed, peace be upon Him. I would like to ask the members to join them tomorrow.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to introduce the last two people in the members' gallery: Paul Halliday and his daughter, Bronwyn, who purchased at a charity event the opportunity to have lunch with myself and other members of caucus. I'd like to welcome them here today.

ANNUAL REPORT, OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I beg to inform the House that today I laid upon the table the 2002-03 Annual Report of the Ombudsman.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent for second and third reading of Bill 110, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

DEFERRED VOTES

ONTARIO HOME PROPERTY TAX RELIEF FOR SENIORS ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR L'ALLÈGEMENT DE L'IMPÔT FONCIER RÉSIDENTIEL POUR LES PERSONNES ÂGÉES DE L'ONTARIO

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 43, An Act to provide Ontario home property tax relief for seniors / Projet de loi 43, Loi prévoyant un allègement de l'impôt foncier résidentiel pour les personnes âgées de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1353 to 1358.

The Speaker: All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Baird, John R.
Barrett, Toby
Beaubien, Marcel
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Brad
Clement, Tony
Coburn, Brian
Cunningham, Dianne
DeFaria, Carl
Dunlop, Garfield
Ecker, Janet
Elliott, Brenda
Flaherty, Jim
Galt, Doug
Gilchrist, Steve
Gill, Raminder

Hardeman, Ernie
Hastings, John
Hudak, Tim
Jackson, Cameron
Johns, Helen
Johnson, Bert
Kells, Morley
Klees, Frank
Marland, Margaret
Martiniuk, Gerry
Maves, Bart
Mazzilli, Frank
McDonald, AL
Miller, Norm
Molinari, Tina R.
Munro, Julia

Mushinski, Marilyn
Newman, Dan
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Sampson, Rob
Spina, Joseph
Sterling, Norman W.
Tascona, Joseph N.
Tsubouchi, David H.
Turnbull, David
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Wood, Bob
Young, David

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic
Bartolucci, Rick
Bisson, Gilles
Bountrogianni, Marie
Boyer, Claudette
Brown, Michael A.
Bryant, Michael
Churley, Marilyn
Colle, Mike
Cordiano, Joseph
Crozier, Bruce
Curling, Alvin

Dombrowsky, Leona
Duncan, Dwight
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hoy, Pat
Kennedy, Gerard
Kormos, Peter
Kwinter, Monte
Marchese, Rosario
Martel, Shelley
Martin, Tony
McGuinty, Dalton

McLeod, Lyn
McMeekin, Ted
Parsons, Ernie
Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Prue, Michael
Pupatello, Sandra
Ramsay, David
Sergio, Mario
Smitherman, George
Sorbara, Greg

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 46; the nays are 35.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated June 11, 2003, this bill is ordered for third reading.

THE RIGHT CHOICES FOR
EQUITY IN EDUCATION ACT
(BUDGET MEASURES), 2003

LOI DE 2003
SUR LES BONS CHOIX POUR L'ÉQUITÉ
EN MATIÈRE D'ÉDUCATION
(MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 53, An Act respecting the equity in education tax credit /
Projet de loi 53, Loi concernant le crédit d'impôt pour l'équité en matière d'éducation.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): We also have a deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 53, An Act respecting the equity in education tax credit.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1401 to 1406.

The Speaker: All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Baird, John R.	Gill, Raminder	Molinari, Tina R.
Barrett, Toby	Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia
Beaubien, Marcel	Hastings, John	Mushinski, Marilyn
Chudleigh, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Newman, Dan
Clark, Brad	Jackson, Cameron	O'Toole, John
Clement, Tony	Johns, Helen	Quellette, Jerry J.
Coburn, Brian	Johnson, Bert	Sampson, Rob
Cunningham, Dianne	Kells, Morley	Spina, Joseph
Curling, Alvin	Klees, Frank	Sterling, Norman W.
DeFaria, Carl	Kwinter, Monte	Tascona, Joseph N.
Dunlop, Garfield	Marland, Margaret	Tsubouchi, David H.
Ecker, Janet	Martiniuk, Gerry	Turnbull, David
Elliott, Brenda	Maves, Bart	Wilson, Jim
Flaherty, Jim	Mazzilli, Frank	Witmer, Elizabeth
Galt, Doug	McDonald, AL	Wood, Bob
Gilchrist, Steve	Miller, Norm	Young, David

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Crozier, Bruce	McLeod, Lyn
Bartolucci, Rick	Dombrowsky, Leona	McMeekin, Ted
Bisson, Gilles	Duncan, Dwight	Parsons, Ernie
Bountrogianni, Marie	Gerretsen, John	Peters, Steve
Boyer, Claudette	Gravelle, Michael	Phillips, Gerry
Bradley, James J.	Hoy, Pat	Prue, Michael
Brown, Michael A.	Kennedy, Gerard	Pupatello, Sandra
Bryant, Michael	Kormos, Peter	Ramsay, David
Christopherson, David	Marchese, Rosario	Sergio, Mario
Churley, Marilyn	Martel, Shelley	Smitherman, George
Colle, Mike	Martin, Tony	Sorbara, Greg
Cordiano, Joseph	McGuinty, Dalton	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 48; the nays are 35.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated June 17, 2003, the bill is ordered for third reading.

1410

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like my vote to be

recorded as a negative on this side. Somehow there was some mistake here.

The Speaker: I appreciate that, and he obviously will be on the record as recording that. The problem is that the table is not allowed to make a change in a vote. I understand that it may have been an accident. Unfortunately, the table recorded it. I'm afraid it is not a point of order. Those are the rules, but of course your point of order will be recorded that your intent was that way.

VISITORS

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Today we have the pleasure of receiving the unstoppable leader from Grand Ravine and some 55 young ladies belonging to the Grand Ravine women's exercise classes. Today, thanks to the leader, Mrs Cristofolis, they wanted to exercise by coming to visit their Legislative Assembly and seeing how the members of Parliament behave. I hope they enjoy their stay here today.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): We welcome our honoured guests.

ORAL QUESTIONS

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My first questions today are to the minister responsible for children's services. Yesterday, Madam Minister, a very damning report was released that says you have been failing Ontario's 17,000 children in care. These are children and young people who are without parents and for whom you and your government have assumed parental responsibilities. This report places Ontario last when it comes to protecting children in care, and we come last in every single category.

Here is a very compelling and frightening statistic: between 1978 and 1995, there was not one single questionable death among children in care in our province. Since 1995, there have been seven questionable deaths.

After you formed the government, children in care in Ontario began to die. These kids are without parents. It is your responsibility to protect them. They find themselves in your care. Why have you failed to protect children in care in the province of Ontario?

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services): I cannot agree with the comment of my colleague across the way. This government has been very, very diligent in taking every effort that it can to protect the children of Ontario. We know that this is very important, particularly when children find themselves in a circumstance where they can no longer stay with their own families and must come under the care of the province.

I want to say to my colleague across the way that it's our government which in fact changed the Family and

Children's Services Act so that not only would we be able to look after children who find themselves in the most unfortunate circumstance of being abused but also children who find themselves neglected and needing someone to look out for their interests.

Mr McGuinty: Madam Minister, here are the facts again: during the 17 years prior to 1995, there wasn't a single questionable death in our province. Since your government assumed responsibility as the government, seven young people have died questionable deaths.

There have been five inquests—there are two more underway right now—into the deaths of these young people. They have made over 280 recommendations. You're not following those recommendations. In fact, the very last inquest report made a specific plea to you to actually follow the recommendations of previous inquests.

The Office of the Child Advocate is supposed to help protect these kids, but the report clearly shows that your government is not giving Ontario's child advocate the tools she needs. The report says, "Ontario's advocacy office is not allowed the tools or powers to conduct meaningful outreach or public reporting." It goes on to say, "The only government that would consider this situation to be acceptable is a government seeking to minimize, contain and silence its child advocate."

Minister, why are you trying to minimize, contain and silence Ontario's child advocate?

Hon Mrs Elliott: Your characterization of the report is unfortunate. When a child dies in this province, whether it occurs in a family, or particularly when it occurs in the care of the state, we take this very seriously. In unfortunate circumstances where an inquest, for instance, is undertaken I can tell you that we look closely at the recommendations to see what we can do as a province to do things better. I look to one recommendation, for instance, as a result of an inquest where 52 of the 54 recommendations have already been undertaken.

With regard to the report that was distributed yesterday which somehow tried to indicate that this government would not want to allow the child advocate to do her job, would somehow try be standing in the way of the child advocate doing her job, I can only say to you that that is absolutely wrong.

Mr McGuinty: Seventeen years prior to your government: zero deaths. Since your government took over the job, seven deaths: James Lonnee died in September 1996 in a young offender facility. He was 16 years old. Stephanie Jobin died in 1998 in a physical restraint in a group home; 13 years old. William Edgar, 1999, physical restraint in a group home; 13 years old. Paola Rosales hung herself; 14 years old. Joshua Dumford, February 2000 in a correctional facility; 18 years old. He died as well. In 17 years we had zero deaths. During the past years of your government we've had seven deaths.

You have not even met with the child advocate since assuming your responsibilities over one year ago. You won't even allow the child advocate in the province of

Ontario to file an annual public report. Every single other province gives their child advocate that responsibility.

Madam Minister, if you're not prepared to stand up and protect the interests of the 17,000 children who find themselves in your care, if you're not prepared to allow the child advocate to assume her responsibility and give public reports about what's going on with respect to those children in care, then I suggest to you that you step aside and allows somebody else to take on the job.

Hon Mrs Elliott: I expect the child advocate to do just what the child advocate in Ontario is supposed to do, and that is to step aside from the government, from the interference of the minister, and offer his or her best advice on how children should be taken care of.

I take issue with the comments from the Leader of the Opposition, who says that we do not take our job seriously and we do not act. When any child dies in this province, particularly under the care of the province, we are most concerned. He referenced one particular inquest that was held as a result of a death. I want to tell you that as a result of that most unfortunate incident, we took specific action to look at our training program to make sure those who are responsible for caring for our children were as best trained as we could have them trained.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Deputy Premier. Today the Ombudsman released a damning report on the failures of your prisons, your tenant protection and your Family Responsibility Office and I have questions with regard to all three.

The Ombudsman describes conditions in jails with three prisoners to a cell with two beds, the third sleeping on the floor with his head next to the toilet. Mr Lewis warns that this not only increases the likelihood of contagious disease, he tells us that these kinds of conditions are resulting in judges letting criminals go after serving only one half to one third of their sentence.

Prison conditions on your watch are resulting not only in dangerous conditions for prisoners themselves but they are endangering the public because you're letting prisoners out after they've served only one half or one third of their time. Your response was to cut \$181 million out of the public safety budget this year. Madam Minister, why do you allow conditions to exist in our jails that are leading to the early release of criminals who are doing only one half to one third of their time?

1420

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I think it's important that the leader understand that the report has been received today. I understand that the respective ministries are reviewing the issues that have been raised by the Ombudsman. Obviously, each ministry wants to work co-operatively with the Office of the Ombudsman to address the concerns that you have indicated, but I can tell the Leader of the Opposition that certainly during and since 1995 this gov-

ernment has worked extremely hard to ensure the demands of public safety are met and that offenders are held securely while incarcerated and that they are rehabilitated upon their release.

Mr McGuinty: Madam Minister, that's not what the Ombudsman is saying, and I suggest you take a look at the report. My colleague Dave Levac has been talking about this for over a year. The fact of the matter is, you're not acting.

The Ombudsman hit the nail on the head when he said, regarding the Family Responsibility Office, that the FRO is "unable to fulfill its support enforcement mandate adequately."

There are 130,000 families who are not receiving their child support. There's over \$1.3 billion owing to these children. That's up \$200 million since last year alone. The Ombudsman makes it clear that the fault here doesn't lie with the kids or their parents; it isn't the workers who are struggling over at the Family Responsibility Office with antiquated computers. He says the fault lies entirely with your government.

We intend to use Internet tracking to find deadbeat parents and make them pay. We're also going to suspend drivers' licences if two or more support payments have been missed.

It has been two years since the Ombudsman recommended upgrading the computer system at the FRO. Why do they continue to wait, to this very day, for an upgraded computer system that will enable them to get the job done and collect the money for those families that are desperately depending on it?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I'm going to refer that to the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services.

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services): We acknowledge that there's always more to do in many of our files, including the Family Responsibility Office, but to say that we're not doing a lot and not working to do more is incorrect.

First of all, let's be clear. The Ombudsman said, "FRO operates for many people's benefits properly." We now process claims faster. It used to take 10 days. Now 95% of support orders are out the door in less than 48 hours. And 85% of court support orders are paid directly to banks. More is being collected for families who need care. In 1994, \$368 million was collected for parents and families who needed help. Now that's up by 50%, to \$561 million to families who need help.

Mr McGuinty: Only this minister could describe \$1.3 billion in arrears, \$1.3 billion that is desperately needed by families, particularly young mothers and their children, as somehow some kind of a success. Only this minister could describe it in that way.

Deputy Premier, the Ombudsman has also blown the whistle on your failure to protect tenants. He points out that while landlords may apply for a rent increase based on your skyrocketing utility costs, you refuse, on the other hand, to allow tenants to apply for a rate reduction when those same utility rates come down. My colleague David Caplan has a bill that would end this problem.

Deputy Premier, will you immediately support David Caplan's bill? Why won't you call it for second and third reading immediately and close this loophole that the Ombudsman has specifically called discriminatory?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I'll refer that to the associate minister.

Hon Tina R. Molinari (Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I'm well aware of the issues raised by the Ombudsman. As a matter of fact, the ministry and the Ombudsman staff and office have already met to discuss this issue.

I want to comment on the Leader of the Opposition's comments about adopting Caplan's amendment. I want to put on the record that their real rent control, until vacancy rates reach 3%, means no rent control at all. As a matter of fact, if they read the Globe and Mail report, it says that vacancy in Toronto is 3.5%. What it really means is that there's no rent control in Toronto at all—that's the Liberal plan.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a question to the Minister of Finance. Minister, we spoke with a woman, Valda Francis of Toronto. She drives a four-year-old compact economy car and had been paying Belair premiums of \$2,200 a year, which was already pretty steep. Belair just notified her that her premiums are being jacked up by 80% to \$4,200 a year, jacked up by two grand a year. When Belair was asked about it, Belair said that across the board they're increasing premiums by 50%.

You and your government since 1995 have held committee hearings, chaired by Mr Sampson—I was there—have passed legislation, have promised to control and stabilize auto insurance premiums. Why is it you're letting Belair jack up premiums 50% across the board, and in the case of Ms Francis—no driving infractions, no claims—to the tune of two grand a year? Why are you letting that happen?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): I appreciate that your solution to the auto insurance problem was to bring in public auto insurance. When you had the opportunity to do that, you did not do it. Second, we had legislation before this House that put in place a framework that will benefit consumers. You voted against it, sir.

Mr Kormos: The fact is, your framework hasn't helped Ms Francis, who's being gouged to the tune of an additional two grand a year. Let's take a look at a family with one young driver, perfect driving record, and driving a 1994 Ford Taurus. In Vancouver, they'd pay around \$1,100 a year in premiums. In Toronto, they'd be paying \$2,000 a year. That's a gap of more than \$850, and that's based on 2001. Since then, as you well know, the gap has grown even larger. The reality is that British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba have been able to control and stabilize rates and keep premiums consistently lower than they've been in Ontario. Quite frankly, BC

has a package of benefits very similar to that of Ontario, indeed a better tort package. You know that.

The difference is that public auto insurance works; your private auto insurers don't. Why don't you commit yourself now to public auto insurance, a system that's proven, a system that's tried, that's fairer to drivers, fairer to victims and provides more modest premiums?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I agree that consumers of auto insurance need help. That's why we've taken the action we've taken and why we're going to take more action. Again, they want solutions that work, not pie-in-the-sky promises. You didn't bring in public auto insurance because you recognized that it wouldn't work, that it was going to cost some billion dollars to implement. Who do you think was going to have to pay those costs? Taxpayers or consumers. Someone would have had to pay those costs.

Second, you voted against legislation that can benefit consumers in auto insurance. You voted against every tax break we gave them on auto insurance premiums. I appreciate the concern, that you're raising this issue here, but what consumers need are real solutions that work, not promises that it has been proved will not work.

Mr Kormos: Minister, your government's approach hasn't provided any solutions and the fact is that the 30-year-plus history of public auto insurance in BC is tried and tested. When are you going to get it? I've been here 15 years and watched three governments try to regulate the private auto insurance industry. You still haven't learned. It's a monster that can't be caged; it's a beast that can't be tamed; it's a mad dog that can't be leashed. When are you going to understand that you can't regulate the private auto insurance industry?

Don't just listen to us, listen to Robert Wesseling, a vice-president of Co-operators insurance, the second-largest auto insurer here in Ontario. He says, "The systems that are working best in Canada are in Manitoba"—public auto—"and Quebec"—public auto.

1430

Premier, when are you going to listen to the people out there—the drivers who are being scammed, gouged, ripped off and exploited? When are you going to look to systems that have proven themselves to provide affordable and fair auto insurance coverage? Why don't you stand up today and say that public auto insurance works for British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and if you're going to provide fairness for drivers and innocent victims, you want to make it work in Ontario?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I thank you for the promotion, but I think the record should show that the Premier sits one seat to my left. Thank you for that thought anyway.

I agree with the honourable member that consumers of auto insurance are feeling significant pressures. That's why we're taking the steps we are taking. We've responded to this before. When we brought in earlier legislation, there was actually a 12% reduction, which is something the honourable member's government was not able to achieve.

We appreciate the advice. If you were serious about it, I hope you would support the legislation we've brought

forward. I hope you would support the additional tax relief we are providing consumers on auto insurance premiums.

Interjection.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I will take that as support from the honourable member for tax relief for auto insurance consumers.

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY OFFICE

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services. Your government is failing in its obligation to ensure that women and children get the support payments they are entitled to. The Ombudsman revealed today that Ontario families are owed \$1.3 billion in support payments; that is a record high. Families are ending up on welfare because of mistakes made in registering court orders or failures in ensuring serious enforcement action. The computer system is completely outdated, and despite repeated requests by the Ombudsman to have it fixed, his requests have been ignored. The Ombudsman said very clearly at the press conference today, "The FRO is not working."

Minister, when are you going to finally respond to the Ombudsman's concerns, and what are you going to do to ensure that women and children get the \$1.3 billion in support payments they are owed?

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services): Doing everything we can to make sure that families get support is very important to us. I note again that the Ombudsman did say, "FRO operates for many people's benefit properly."

I acknowledge that there is more work to do in the Family Responsibility Office. I have visited it personally, and I recognize that there is more to be done. I want to say that while we recognize things need to be improved, action is being taken. We have recently invested \$800,000 in new staff, so that we can process claims more quickly. I checked just before I came into the House today, thinking you might be asking me about this, and we are working on options for new software solutions to build a new system that will allow us to do an even better job.

Is there more to be done? Yes. But do we, to this date, have measurements to say we are doing a better job? Yes. And I look forward to offering those in the supplementary.

Ms Martel: I repeat, the Ombudsman said at the press conference today, "The FRO is not working." And that's not the first time he's raised concerns about the FRO. He's raised concerns in every single report since he's been the Ombudsman, and his predecessor, Roberta Jamieson, raised concerns too. In fact, both of those people raised concerns about a computer system, which you have done nothing about since you have been in government, Minister.

I remind you that support payments owed to women and children are at a record high: \$1.3 billion owed to

families that they are not receiving because of problems at FRO. Resources for the computer system have not been allocated, despite repeated calls for this to be done. Staff are totally demoralized because they can't do the job they want to for women and children.

I ask you again, Minister—this fiasco has gone on long enough—when are you going to assume your obligation to ensure that women and children get the support payments they are owed?

Hon Mrs Elliott: I say to my colleague across the way that we recognize that more needs to be done. We have added more staff, and a new computer system is in the works. And I say to my colleague across the way that under their government, if a family contacted the Family Responsibility Office and needed assistance in getting support, it would take up to 10 days to get assistance, to get that court-ordered support to the family. Now, under our government, 95% of payments are delivered to the families or to the banks within 48 hours. The \$368 million in 1994 is now up to \$561 million delivered to families. Complaints are almost half of what they were just a few years ago.

Looking for tools: what has this government done to find ways to get support for families? It's our government that now allows a driver's licence to be suspended, that now can garnish joint bank accounts and that now calls upon private collection agencies to help us get help for families.

ENERGY CONTRACTS

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): I have a question for the Minister of Energy. People in my community were outraged at retroactive natural gas price increases that were approved by your government. Now they could be ripped off on their electricity.

This week the Ontario Energy Board issued a consumer advisory warning customers that your government will now allow negative-option billing in electricity. There's no sales tactic more despised in this country than negative-option billing; that is, charging first and asking second. Consumers could get stuck with a contract they have absolutely no interest in. They can have a contract imposed on them simply by forgetting to open a letter. The Consumers' Association of Canada says, "The government has no plans to inform and educate consumers about this change in regulation."

You have left electricity consumers at the mercy of electricity retail marketers. This is a sector where more than a few predatory practices were exposed last year. Minister, why did your government fail to notify consumers of your support for negative-option billing in electricity?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, Government House Leader): Nothing could be further from the truth. There's no support for that practice in Ontario. In fact, the member opposite identified specific concerns with respect to electricity. There is not a single retailer of

electricity offering retail contracts to consumers in Ontario. Any concern that a residential customer might be forced off the 4.3-cent plan: it's simply not the case.

Mr Duncan: Minister, then let me refer you to the Ontario Energy Board Act. Section 79.4 brings in the price cap. Subsection 79.4(5) grants an exception to the price cap if, and I quote, "The consumer renews or enters into a contract." Subsection (6) says, "The commodity price for electricity payable by a consumer is subject to any contract the consumer renews."

Last year we heard about electricity retailers bamboozling people into signing contracts. Now you're giving them the power to simply renew old contracts, without any consent from consumers, and forcing them to pay more. Minister, it could happen tomorrow. Why are you setting up the conditions for gouging consumers with negative-option billing in the electricity market?

Hon Mr Baird: In fact, the government is undertaking no such process. Let me be clear: no one is offering renewals with respect to electricity in Ontario. The 4.3-cent fixed price that's available to residential customers remains in place. No one is out there offering renewals—zero per cent chance. I can't be any clearer than that.

There is an ability, between now and 2006 and after 2006, if green power were offered at a greater rate, over 4.3 cents, for people to enter into those contracts. If someone says, "I don't want dirty coal. I would like clean-generated wind power for use in my home," and they voluntarily want to pay more, those contracts aren't available today, so there is no possibility of renewal. I can't be clearer than 100%, it won't happen.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. The secondary school year is almost over. Many graduating students from both grade 12 and grade 13 form the double cohort. We have reached the time when students must decide what college or university they want to attend. That is, the students must accept an offer of admission. I know your target is 70,000 students. Are you on target?

1440

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues): In fact, we did have a great announcement by the Council of Ontario Universities this morning. It has been a time of anticipation for our students, but they are to be congratulated. They've actually accepted offers—71,913 students have now accepted offers from the universities and colleges. It is keeping our promise. It is a great day for our students. Every qualified and willing student will find a place in our colleges and universities.

Over the summer, there will be some students who will continue to apply. There are some spaces still available. They can call the application centre in Guelph, whose number is 519-732-1940. Just to say—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up. Supplementary?

Mr Miller: That's great news, Minister. I know you've been working for many years on the challenge of preparing Ontario's colleges and universities for the double cohort.

I've got a personal interest in the double cohort, as my daughter Renée is graduating from grade 12 next week—the good news is that the whip has given me permission to go to the graduation. In Renée's case, she applied to three universities—the University of Guelph, the University of Ottawa and McMaster University—and was accepted to all three. She has chosen to go to the University of Guelph.

Could you tell me about what preparations your ministry has made to prepare for the double cohort?

Hon Mrs Cunningham: I do appreciate the compliments, but the compliments really go to the students and their teachers, to the university presidents, to the leadership we have in this great post-secondary system in the province of Ontario.

To begin with, another \$200 million will be committed in the 2003 budget to a special fund to protect quality during the time when double-cohort students are enrolled. I say this because that's on top of 355 million new dollars in operating funds. On top of that, we're very proud of the research and development—the Ontario Innovation Trust—the set-aside on tuition; OSOTF 2, which is 400 million new dollars that will go into student assistance. Every student who qualifies will, in fact, get student assistance.

I'd like to finish by saying that what we're really focusing on here is the additional wonderful academic staff, the books, the computers and all the libraries. Those are the quality issues—

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. New question.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): My question is to the Minister of Finance. One hundred and ninety-two days ago, you passed Bill 198, which promised rate relief for Ontario's driving motorists. Yet, 192 days later, while Ontario motorists are facing an average increase of 19.2% in auto insurance, you have done nothing except talk about round tables, task forces and sending your regulations out to focus groups. You've done nothing to move forward with these regulations and offered nothing but empty words as some promise to come for Ontario's driving motorists.

Will you stand in your place and tell us today why you're sitting there and fiddling when, 192 days after the passage of a piece of legislation, you've still failed to get your cabinet colleagues to support a package of regulations to deliver any reform or any support or any help to Ontario's driving motorists? When are you going to actually do something?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): I appreciate the honourable member's concern, and I appreciate his

advice. It would have been helpful if he had voted for the legislation.

Mr Smitherman: Well, to the same minister, and a little—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Supplementary.

Mr Smitherman: The member from Scarborough East says, "Gotcha," but here's the "gotcha": I'll remind you what Bill 198 was about. That was the bill where you had to pull out your flawed pension reforms because they were so poorly done. That's why we didn't vote for your lousy bill, Madam Minister. You can sit there all you want and try to turn the responsibility back, but for right now, you have the responsibility and apparently you have the power to move forward on regulations that have been promised.

Since you're so unwilling or unable, it seems, to get your cabinet colleagues to support any package of reforms, will you stand in your place today and commit to releasing the regulations in their current form—the ones you've been focus-grouping—and will you give a commitment as to when Ontarians can expect to see this package of regulatory reform you're hanging your hat on but that you're not getting done?

Hon Mrs Ecker: The fact remains that you voted against the same legislation you are now so anxious to have put into effect. Secondly, you also voted against tax relief for auto insurance consumers.

Interjections.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Watch the finger.

I appreciate your advice. Perhaps the honourable member would have preferred that we did not consult and did not meet with health care practitioners, advocates on behalf of consumers and insurance representatives. Perhaps he would have preferred us to simply go out and do something before we knew it would be a package that would help. This government is indeed going to do what it said it was going to do. We're doing it with the help and the assistance of people in the field who understand the issue, as opposed to the record of your government when you were in power—19% increases.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Minister, 40,000 people move to York region annually. This kind of tremendous growth in York region has created a population that—along with increased traffic. More and more people are commuting from my riding and other parts of the 905 region into Toronto for work and other activities. In order to maintain the competitiveness of the region and to keep our economy strong, we must keep this flow of traffic moving. Could the minister explain what action his ministry has taken to combat GTA congestion and improve the efficiency of the region's transportation network?

Hon Frank Klees (Minister of Transportation): I want to thank the hard-working member from York North for that question. Those of us who live in the GTA

fully understand the challenges of traffic gridlock. Our government has invested some \$7.5 billion since 1995 in the transportation network in our province. In the GTA alone, some \$4 billion of that was invested. We've made improvements to Highway 401. In fact, \$401 million was invested in the 401 corridor to expand lanes and bottleneck locations. Some \$100 million of that investment was made as well in Highway 404 expansions, with some 30 kilometres of additional lanes from the 401 to Aurora Sideroad.

Just this morning, I joined my colleague Tina Molinari to officially open two new ramps on the 404 at 16th Avenue. That will add to the economic benefits of York region. It will add to the quality of life. It's just one more investment on the part of our government to do what has to be done to deal with the gridlock issue in the GTA.

Mrs Munro: Minister, thank you for that response. One of the comments many of my constituents make is that they want to know what we are doing to encourage people to take public transit. They understand that an increase in the use of public transit has the added benefit of improving our air quality by cutting down on harmful vehicle emissions. To accomplish this, we must improve public transit by making it more efficient and accessible. Minister, what is the government's plan for improving public transit in the province?

1450

Hon Mr Klees: The fact is that our long-term commitment to transportation in this province includes a balance between investment in our road system and in public transit. We've committed \$3.25 billion over 10 years to deal with this balanced and integrated system of transit. Our challenge, quite frankly, is to bring the federal government to the table to join us and to make a long-term commitment to funding transit in this province. We made an announcement of some \$50 million to the York region quick start transit program. That is going to deal with some of the pressures for public transit in York region. Some \$67 million was committed to a GTA bus rapid transit system. There is much more that has to be done, but quite frankly we can't do it alone. The federal government is quick to speak about this. We need them to match our \$3.25 billion over the next 10 years, and then we can truly begin to deal with the long-term challenges of transit—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

CONTAMINATION IN PORT COLBORNE

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): My question is for the new part-time Minister of the Environment. I'm going to send you a letter from Neighbours Helping Neighbours in Port Colborne, which corrects the record of the former Minister of the Environment who stood in this House and tried to blame the victims for the environmental problems in their homes in Port Colborne. The government has ordered a full cleanup of the soil around 25 homes in Port Colborne. That's only a small

fraction of the homes affected by contamination. INCO ignored that order and offered to clean up only parts of those yards. Then INCO discovered in January that there was serious contamination inside the houses. They hid that information from the residents.

I have been through this in my own riding in south Riverdale. I've watched children whose brains are damaged permanently. They have learning disabilities because of high lead levels in their blood. Now it's happening to the children in Port Colborne. They're here today to demand that you require Inco to immediately conduct a full cleanup to protect their children and community from this toxic lead which is in their homes, which they're breathing in on a daily basis.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Minister of the Environment): First of all, I want to say in defence of my colleague Chris Stockwell that he answered this question very sincerely in this House last week to the best of his ability and he gave the facts as were known at the time.

Ms Churley: Read the letter, Jim.

Hon Mr Wilson: I've just read the letter. Thank you, Marilyn. I certainly will take it very seriously. Officials have informed me in the last 24 hours that they have an air quality assessment study that has come in. The results have come in. I've not seen that. They're going to brief me on that as soon as they get a chance to go through it. It is a priority. It's part of the community-based program that has been put in place, I understand. Of course we'll do everything we can to help these residents, and I welcome them here to Queen's Park today, and I welcome your suggestions along this line.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Well, Minister, you certainly haven't done everything that you could have. Look, I know these folks. I know their neighbourhood. They're hard-working, honest people, senior citizen, retirees, young families, kids, and they've been poisoned by tons of lead that has been spewed out by Inco over the course of decades now. We know that some of those kids have overly high levels of lead in their blood. We also know, as you should, that those lead levels can affect their development and brain functioning. Your government has done nothing to assess the level of risk or to impose an immediate cleanup of the lead contamination outside and inside these homes.

You see, these folks don't have a choice. These houses have no value. They can't sell these houses and move on. These are their homes. They have to live there. They're prisoners in those homes, and they're being poisoned and killed by Inco's lead and by your inaction. Tell these people today that the Ministry of the Environment is going to come to their defence and insist on an immediate cleanup and immediate remediation, not just of the 25 homes but of every home impacted, not just outside those homes but inside those homes as well. Don't let these people suffer and die slowly any longer.

Hon Mr Wilson: I think the Ministry of the Environment wants to do the right thing for these people and for all Ontarians. The lead issue is an issue that we'll look at

on a priority basis. As you know, Inco has already been into, by your own letter here, six of the 25 homes and properties to try and clean those up. I don't think either side should be saying much more about this, because there is a civil action suit on appeal with respect to this issue.

So I appreciate the letter. We will look at the lead issue and the whole issue once again, but I want to tell you, the people at the Ministry of the Environment who have briefed me recently seemed very, very sincere about wanting to help. They're not a part of any political party and they don't do political stunts like you do every day in the House like this—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Wilson: —every day in the House. We're going to do the right thing for these good people. I tell you that, Peter.

MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a question for the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and the Environment. Minister, Premier Eves, when he was establishing his cabinet previously, made the mistake of forcing one individual to take on the responsibility of being the Minister of Energy and the Minister of the Environment at the same time. That was the Honourable Chris Stockwell. I said at the time, as did others, that you cannot have a person with regulatory responsibility and a person with other responsibilities that would be regulated having the same position. You're the Minister of Northern Development, you're the Minister of Mines, which means you have obligations which are far different from being Minister of the Environment. How on earth did you accept from the Premier of this province a situation which places you in a direct conflict of interest as a regulatory minister and as a minister who is there to advance the cause of the mining industry and other exploiting ministries?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Minister of the Environment): I don't agree with the premise of his question. He's on a fishing expedition, I guess. We'll see what he comes up with here.

Mr Bradley: If we can demonstrate it, your answer to the last question, where you're dealing with a situation where you have a mining processing company and then as Minister of the Environment, is a clear indication of where a conflict can arise.

Let me quote from the editorial in the St Catharines Standard, which was talking about the previous situation:

"Although Stockwell may be competent to lead either ministry, he should not do both. When push comes to shove over environmental issues versus energy considerations, he is inclined to let the energy considerations prevail."

It goes on to say, "The health of Ontarians is too important to continue to jeopardize through improperly tested drinking water and air polluted by government-

owned power stations. Both those issues need straightening out, and Eves should appoint a second person to do the job."

Minister, you have a specific responsibility. You are an advocate for companies, for industries which are in the business of exploiting natural resources. You're also in a regulatory ministry. How on earth can you do both without being in a direct conflict of interest?

Hon Mr Wilson: This is a fellow who's always asking for more bureaucrats in the Ministry of the Environment. He's had a very good record supporting government bureaucrats. Now today he's saying that northern development bureaucrats—staff—somehow don't have the environment as their top priority when they're reviewing all matters before them. I can tell you that the environment is a top priority for this government, unlike the five years when you were in office—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Wilson: —and failed to really do anything except put out a whole pile of press releases. Every ministry, whether it's environment or labour, transportation or health or rural affairs or municipal affairs, has the environment as a number one priority. Did you not learn anything from Walkerton? Did you not learn anything from the last few years in this province? We have the environment as a top priority, and no minister is in conflict with respect to the environment in this province.

CANCER SCREENING

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): I would like to direct my question today to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

First of all, I want to thank him and the Premier for handling the SARS crisis so efficiently and effectively. On behalf of all Ontarians, I want to thank him. I hope the federal government will help in our efforts to deal with the effects of SARS.

Minister, I understand that today you were at an event with Toronto Police Chief Julian Fantino where you highlighted a recent investment in a program to screen for colorectal cancer. As you know, the effects of cancer are felt by every citizen in this province, whether it be through a personal battle or that of a friend or a relative. Cancer has unfortunately touched the lives of too many people.

I know that all Ontarians, including members of this House and the citizens of my great riding, welcome new initiatives to help fight this terrible disease. Can you provide us with the details of the new program you discussed this morning, please?

1500

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I thank the honourable member for his question and for his unsolicited appreciation.

I'd be happy to share the details of this program in the House. As the member alluded to, the initiative is a \$2.8-million investment to support a brand new pilot project for colorectal cancer screening. This will be managed

through Cancer Care Ontario. It is a pioneering project that will monitor the screening of patients through public health units and their family doctors, and assess how we can maximize participation. This is vital information because we know that screening reduces both the number of new cases of colorectal cancer and the number of deaths it can cause. In the span of one year, this initiative will provide access to the screening procedure to nearly 150,000 Ontarians through the participation of 450 physicians and six public health units.

We cannot underestimate colorectal cancer. It is the third most common cancer in Canada, with 17,600 cases diagnosed last year alone. We are taking a proactive approach.

Mr Gill: Thank you, Minister, for that answer. I'm very proud of the work our government has done to set up this program. It is undoubtedly a significant step toward reducing the incidence of colorectal cancer.

Unfortunately, I have to recognize that this particular initiative is just one battle in the war against all cancers. A quick glance at recent medical statistics tells me that there are more than 400,000 people with cancer in Ontario, and that 53,000 more people will be diagnosed this year, unfortunately. Could the minister please inform the House as to what other initiatives are being taken by this government to fight all cancers?

Interjection.

Hon Mr Clement: The deputy leader of the opposition has some questions as well, but I'd be happy to answer them when it's her turn. In the meantime, I am answering the honourable member's question.

I am proud to say that I can answer this question very directly, because we do have a proven record of making unprecedented investments in fighting cancers of all types. We're spending \$2.5 billion a year on cancer services, which is an increase of 1.6 billion new dollars since 1995, and we're investing \$1 billion into a new world-class cancer research institute that will attract top researchers from around the world. We're committed, as part of our Road Ahead plan, to fund research to find the cures for the two most common forms of cancer: breast and prostate.

If I could take this opportunity today, being with Chief Fantino and another great volunteer, Darryl Sittler, a great Canadian and a great hockey player, is showing that we're getting the volunteer community out here to fight the fight against cancer as well. At this time I would like to thank both Chief Fantino and Darryl Sittler. They're a great advantage to this community and this province.

LANDFILL

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. My constituents are relieved by a landmark decision of the Ontario Superior Court this week that renders the terms of reference of the proposed Richmond landfill expansion invalid. This decision will impact all scoped environmental assessments.

From the beginning of the process, concerned residents and the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte worked together to stop the approval of the terms of reference that prevented the community from considering alternatives to the landfill expansion. They wrote to your ministry and asked you not to approve a scoped environmental assessment, but your government did not listen. My constituents had no choice but to turn to the courts.

The Superior Court has ruled in favour of the people of Napanee and struck down the flawed terms of reference at the Richmond landfill expansion. Minister, will you now listen? Will you tell the people of my riding that you will not appeal the Superior Court decision?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Minister of the Environment): It's a little premature for me to say that definitively today. The ministry is reviewing the court's decision—I gather it's a fair decision and a lengthy decision—and considering all their options. I'll await the advice of the staff at the ministry and will inform the honourable member when we've come to a decision on that.

Mrs Dombrowsky: Minister, the courts have validated the concerns not just of my constituents but of thousands of Ontarians who have been crying out against your government's assault on our environment. Even a member of your own caucus stood in this House yesterday and urged your government to respect the rights of his constituents to consider alternatives. I wrote to the minister a year ago outlining many of the issues which the court has addressed. Now the courts have clearly ruled that the people in our province have the right to consider alternatives to any environmental proposal.

If you appeal this decision, you will prevent people in my community from presenting alternatives to the landfill. The Superior Court has acted in the best interests of the environment and of the people of Ontario. Minister, will you do the same? Will you respect their rights and the court's decision and not seek to appeal it?

Hon Mr Wilson: Again, I appreciate the question. We're reviewing the decision. I'll be sure to get back to the honourable member and her constituents and Mr Jackson's constituents, the people of Ontario, just as soon as we've made a decision.

ITER FUSION PROJECT

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is for the excellent Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation. I recently tabled a petition in the House concerning the international thermonuclear experimental reactor project, commonly known as ITER. I introduced it in the House, and the petition asked that the Parliament of Ontario take the necessary steps to strengthen the Canadian bid on the ITER research facility, which is in my riding, hopefully. The province asked the federal government to show some leadership and the commitment necessary for Canada to win this bid.

Minister, if any, what leadership role or what action has the government taken to show that ITER is an

important project, and what can we expect to come from the petition I presented in this House?

Interjections.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation): I just made it in this week. Thank goodness for that. I thank the member for Durham. You don't know how much I thank you for that question here this afternoon.

It is in the great riding of Durham that ITER will be located. This is the visionary research project, a global-class research project, to establish fusion as a viable option for power generation. The member for Durham, Mr O'Toole, has taken a leadership role in advocating this proposal for the people of Ontario and for Canada.

The government of Ontario has been supportive since 1996, and most recently, as this matter is coming to a head, Canada is competing with Japan, France and Spain in this area for this visionary project. Most recently the government of Ontario committed to equal funding of the project whether it's sited in Canada or not. Now we need the federal government to do the same thing; it's absolutely imperative that they do the same thing. I say to the Liberals opposite, talk to the Liberals in Ottawa. Tell them to stop being sheepish. Stop grazing on this one. Stand up for Ontario.

Applause.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you very much, Minister. I too applaud you and the pride and enthusiasm and leadership that you show, not just in Durham, not just in Ontario but indeed across Canada. I was there when Minister Flaherty actually engaged the federal members—he often has other names for them. The federal members were in the council of Clarington's chamber and he challenged them to get to work to do their job to represent not just Durham but indeed Ontario.

Minister, this is another example of your leadership and our government's commitment to make sure that research in Ontario is the road ahead. Can you please tell the House what some of the benefits would be and how positively it could affect not just my riding but every Ontarian.

Hon Mr Flaherty: What an opportunity it is, not only for Durham region but for Ontario and for Canada. I do urge the federal members—there's something like 100 of them, I'm told, in Ottawa, grazing in Ottawa—we need them to stand up for Ontario. Here's what they need to say. They need to say that it would result in the creation of 68,000 person-years of employment, the attraction of 250, and perhaps more, international scientists of global quality. That's the kind of project this is for the people of Canada, for the people of Ontario. It takes vision, it takes the big picture, and I urge those 100 elected people in Ottawa to rise to the occasion, stand up for Ontario, stand up for all of us in Canada.

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SCHOOL POOLS

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): My question is to the Minister of Education. Minister, your

policies are about to shut down a swimming program with an Olympic record. The North York Aquatic Club trains 28 children at Riverdale school in my riding. Six Olympians have—

Interjections.

Ms Churley: Mr Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Stop the clock for a minute. The member is having—I know it was fun-loving; it wasn't yelling across, they were being fun-loving, but it is rather loud. The member may continue. I thank the members.

Ms Churley: I'm saying that a swimming pool in my riding is about to be shut down. It trains 28 children at the Riverdale school. It's a great pool. Six Olympians have come out of that club. Now your board supervisor says he's going to triple the fees to the pool, which will add another \$33,000 to the cost of the program. Parents of these Olympic hopefuls say they simply cannot afford to pay these fees. They're not rich people. The program will shut down.

I'm asking you: will you order your board hatchetman, Paul Christie, to stop his fee hike and let the kids swim? Minister, will you do that?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I understand that the Toronto District School Board does have a working group in Toronto with the Toronto council. It was my understanding that they had been discussing permit fees and community access to schools and pools. I would certainly hope, in response to the concerns that have been expressed by the member—and I know that she is very sincere about the children involved in this program—that the board would be sensitive to the group's ability to pay and also that any charges would be based on a fair recovery based on the actual costs.

Ms Churley: Minister, you control the purse strings. You set the rules with your funding formula. School boards are increasing fees across the province, and in Toronto the situation is much worse. One parent using the Riverdale pool says only parents who have tons of money will be able to enrol their kids in competitive sports programs. She says that because of your policies we're losing the next generation of Olympic hopefuls.

Public power means that every child gets the same opportunity to work toward the Olympics and to succeed, that you don't have to be rich. The NDP will fund community use of pools and other facilities. Minister, why won't you do that for the lower- and middle-income kids in my riding?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Other boards in the province of course are in similar situations. I would just say to the member opposite that what has happened there is that they have worked with their municipal partners, and oftentimes they have developed partnerships and they have reciprocal agreements. Again, getting back to what you said before, I think it's important that our young people have an opportunity to participate in these extracurricular programs. I would hope that the Toronto board would be sensitive to their ability to pay and also

that they would only be recovering costs based on the actual use of that space.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I have the business of the House for next week.

On Monday afternoon, we'll debate Bill 23, the great Ontario Energy Board reform act. In the evening, we'll debate Bill 41, the budget legislation arising from the budget of the Minister of Finance.

Tuesday afternoon we will again debate Bill 41. Tuesday evening we'll consider a motion for interim supply.

Wednesday afternoon we will debate Bill 41.

Thursday morning we'll debate ballot item number 17, standing in the name of Mr Colle, and ballot item number 18, standing in the name of Mr Parsons. Thursday afternoon is to be announced, so stay tuned.

PETITIONS

LONDON HEALTH SCIENCES CENTRE

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the London Health Sciences Centre is a world-class academic health sciences centre serving people throughout southwestern Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Health has forced the London Health Sciences Centre to find \$17 million in annual savings by 2005; and

"Whereas the London Health Sciences Centre has agreed to cut ... programs in order to satisfy directions from the provincial Ministry of Health; and

"Whereas these cuts will put the health of the people of southwestern Ontario, and particularly the children ... at risk; and

"Whereas these cuts will diminish the London Health Sciences Centre's standing as a regional health care resource; and

"Whereas these cuts will worsen the continuing physician shortages in the region;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned" 4,000 individuals "petition the Ontario Legislature to demand that the" Ontario "government take immediate action to ensure that these important health services are maintained so that the health and safety of people throughout southwestern Ontario are not put at risk."

I'm in full agreement and have affixed my signature to this petition.

BENEFITS FOR RETIRED WORKERS

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have hundreds of petitions on health care. They read:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, in an era of growing health care privatization and care for profit, retired Ontario workers are entitled to live their senior years in dignity without fear of unaffordable health-related expenses; and

"Whereas following the 2002 OPSEU public service strike, the Eves government exploited special cabinet powers to impose serious cuts to the medical benefits of its own retired employees; and

"Whereas these benefit rollbacks will force public service retirees to pay out more and more of their fixed incomes for costly prescription medications, dental services and other benefits;

"Whereas the overwhelming majority of the affected retirees were front-line public service workers who spent their working lives providing care and protection for our communities;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: the Eves government must immediately reverse all the cuts to the Ontario public service retirees' benefits package, which it imposed following the 2002 OPSEU strike."

These petitions are signed by OPSEU members. I will affix my signature because I fully support it.

ITER FUSION PROJECT

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Earlier today I raised a question with the member from Whitby-Ajax, the Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation. Here are some petitions on that same topic.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the proposed ITER fusion research facility would result in 68,000 person-years of employment and an estimated \$9.4 billion in foreign investment;

"Whereas ITER would bring international scientists and researchers to Canada and place our nation in the forefront of new developments in research and technology;

"Whereas ITER is strongly supported by business, labour, educators, elected officials and citizens throughout Durham region, the host community;

"Whereas the province of Ontario has already recognized the economic importance of ITER to Canada and the world by committing \$300 million to support the Canadian ITER bid;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: that the Parliament of Ontario take all the necessary steps to strengthen the Canadian bid for the ITER research facility, including the commitment of more funds and other resources to support a successful Canadian bid; and that the province of Ontario ask the federal government to show the leadership and commitment necessary for Canada to win the ITER bid."

I'm pleased to present this petition to Mario, who is from the riding of Thunder Bay-Atikokan, having signed and endorsed this same petition.

HOME CARE

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas well-managed and adequately funded home health care is a growing need in our community; and

"Whereas the provincial government has frozen community care access centre budgets, which has meant dramatic cuts to service agency funding and services to vulnerable citizens, as well as shortened visits by front-line workers; and

"Whereas these dramatic cuts, combined with the increased complexity of care for those who do qualify for home care, has led to an impossible cost burden to home care agencies; and

"Whereas the wages and benefits received by home care workers employed by home care agencies are well below the wages and benefits of workers doing comparable jobs in institutional settings; and

"Whereas front-line staff are also required to subsidize the home care program in our community by being responsible for paying for their own gas and for vehicle maintenance; and

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"Whereas other CCACs and CCAC-funded agencies across the province compensate their staff between 29 cents and 42.7 cents per kilometre; and

"Whereas CCAC-funded agency staff in our community are paid 26 cents a kilometre, with driving time considered 'hours worked';

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To act now to increase funding to the CCAC of Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington in order for it to adequately fund service agencies so they can fairly compensate front-line workers."

I will affix my signature to this petition because I am in full agreement.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I've got hundreds of names of people supporting this petition against the continuing actions of supervisors in Hamilton-Wentworth, Ottawa-Carleton and Toronto district school boards.

"To the Ontario Legislature:

"Whereas the government has cut over \$2 billion from public education over the past seven years;

"Whereas the provincial funding formula does not provide sufficient funds for local district school board trustees to meet the needs of students;

"Whereas district school boards around the province have had to cut needed programs and services, including library, music, physical ed and special education;

"Whereas the district school boards in Hamilton-Wentworth, Ottawa-Carleton and Toronto refused to

make further cuts and were summarily replaced with government-appointed supervisors;

"We, the undersigned elected leaders of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, call on the government to restore local democracy by removing the supervisors in the Hamilton-Wentworth, Ottawa-Carleton and Toronto district school boards."

I support this petition.

SENIORS' PROPERTY TAX CREDIT

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): I've got a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario's senior citizens have devoted themselves to building Ontario's outstanding quality of life and have earned the right to a safe, secure retirement; and—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Could the member drop the prop?

Mr Gill: "Whereas the government of Ontario has introduced the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief For Seniors Act, 2003; and

"Whereas the act will ensure that every eligible senior homeowner or renter would receive property tax reimbursements on their principal residence, starting July 1, 2003; and

"Whereas this would provide an average annual net savings of \$475 for 945,000 senior households;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario enact the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act, 2003, to ensure Ontario seniors benefit from lower taxes on their homes."

I'm pleased to affix my name to it.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government, led by the Eves Tories, has severely damaged public education and created turmoil in our schools since they took office in 1995; and

"Whereas the current Toronto-based education funding formula is broken when it comes to rural schools; and

"Whereas our community schools in both Springfield and West Lorne are being threatened with closure; and

"Whereas rural schools are the heart and soul of their communities;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, demand that Education Minister Elizabeth Witmer immediately address the funding formula in relation to rural schools and place a moratorium on rural school closures."

I'm in full agreement and have affixed my signature hereto.

BENEFITS FOR RETIRED WORKERS

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Another petition from hundreds of people:

"Whereas in an era of growing health care privatization and care for profit, retired Ontario workers are entitled to live their senior years in dignity without fear of unaffordable health-related expenses; and

"Whereas following the 2002 OPSEU public service strike the Eves government exploited special cabinet powers to impose serious cuts to the medical benefits of its own retired employees; and

"Whereas these benefit rollbacks will force public service retirees to pay out more and more of their fixed incomes for costly prescription medications, dental services and other benefits; and

"Whereas the overwhelming majority of the affected retirees were front-line public service workers who spent their working lives providing care and protection for our communities;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Eves government must immediately reverse all the cuts to the Ontario public service retirees' benefits package which it imposed following the 2002 OPSEU strike."

I support this petition.

SENIORS' PROPERTY TAX CREDIT

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's senior citizens have devoted themselves to building Ontario's outstanding quality of life and have earned the right to a safe and secure retirement; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has introduced the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act, 2003; and

"Whereas the act, which ensures that every eligible senior house-owner or renter would receive property tax reimbursements on their principal residence starting July 1, 2003; and

"Whereas this would provide an average annual net savings of \$475 for about 945,000 seniors' households in Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly enact the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act, 2003, to ensure Ontario's seniors benefit from lower taxes on their residences."

I have attached my signature in support, as well.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Eves government has increased the fees paid by seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities by 15% or \$7.02 per diem effective August 1, 2002; and

"Whereas this fee increase will cost seniors and our most vulnerable more than \$200 a month; and

"Whereas this increase is 11.1% above the rent increase guidelines for tenants in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the increase in the government's own contribution to raise the level of long-term-care services this year is less than \$2 per resident per day; and

"Whereas, according to the government's own funded study, Ontario ranks last amongst comparable jurisdictions in the amount of time provided to a resident for nursing and personal care; and

"Whereas the long-term-care funding partnership has been based on government accepting the responsibility to fund the care and services these residents need; and

"Whereas government needs to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$750 million over the next three years to raise the level of service for Ontario's long-term-care residents to those in Saskatchewan in 1999; and

"Whereas this province has been built by seniors who should be able to live out their lives with dignity, respect and in comfort in this province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Demand that Premier Eves reduce his 15% fee increase on seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities and increase provincial government support for nursing and personal care to adequate levels."

I will affix my signature as I am in full agreement.

HIGHWAY 407

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The Chair recognizes the member for Durham, but I think the member picked up some extra paper for that.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I'm busy reading this document called The Road Ahead. It's sort of like the Harry Potter book.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the timely and efficient movement of people and products is crucial to the success of the Ontario economy;

"Whereas the province of Ontario is meeting the challenge of traffic congestion in the greater Toronto area by improvements to our highway networks and by improved public transportation;

"Whereas the further construction of Highway 407 eastward into the Durham region would improve the flow of traffic in Durham region and throughout the GTA;

"Whereas the citizens and municipalities of Durham region have faced uncertainty over the final alignment of the proposed 407 highway for many years"—in fact, when I was on council—"and are entitled to a timely resolution to this matter;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Parliament of Ontario take" the necessary "steps to fast-track the extension of Highway 407 eastward, into the Durham region, while ensuring that all the necessary environmental assessments and public" consultation processes are followed, as they should be.

I'm pleased to present this petition to Timothy and sign it with my endorsement.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads as follows:

"Whereas the Eves government has increased the fees paid by seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term care facilities by 15% or \$7.02 per diem effective August 1, 2002; and

"Whereas this fee increase will cost seniors and our most vulnerable more than \$200 a month; and

"Whereas this increase is 11.1% above the rent increase guidelines for tenants in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the increase in the government's own contribution to raise the level of long-term-care services this year is less than \$2 per resident per day; and

"Whereas according to the government's own funded study, Ontario ranks last amongst comparable jurisdictions in the amount of time provided to a resident for nursing and personal care; and

"Whereas the long-term-care funding partnership has been based on government accepting the responsibility to fund the care and services that residents need; and

"Whereas government needs to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$750 million over the next three years to raise the level of service for Ontario's long-term-care residents to those in Saskatchewan in 1999; and

"Whereas this province has been built by seniors who should be able to live out their lives with dignity, respect and in comfort in this province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Demand that Premier Eves reduce his 15% fee increase on seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities and increase provincial government support for nursing and personal care to adequate levels."

I affix my signature; I'm in complete agreement with the petition.

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): Mr Speaker, I seek unanimous consent of the House to pass third reading, without debate, of my Bill 2.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is there consent? There is not consent.

1530

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THE RIGHT CHOICES ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LES BONS CHOIX (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Mr Baird, on behalf of Mrs Ecker, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 41, An Act to implement Budget measures / Projet de loi 41, Loi mettant en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, Government House Leader): I'll indicate that I will just be speaking for about two minutes, and then I will be sharing my time with the hard-working, effective member for Halton, the minister from Thornhill and the whip from the rolling hills of Northumberland.

This is the budget bill, which of course deals with tax measures and government expenditures. I wanted today to use a few minutes just to recognize someone who has worked in my constituency office for more than eight years, who is retiring later this month, and tomorrow evening we'll have a retirement party for her. Cathy Boswell has served the people of Nepean for four years and then the people of Nepean-Carleton starting her fifth year. She is someone who has been very helpful to a lot of constituents with Family Responsibility Office problems, with birth certificates, with requests for information on government programs. From time to time, constituents have called to give their opinions on the issues of the day and she has been a sounding board for me, and has been able to report back on what the people of Nepean-Carleton are thinking. Some days that's a pleasant job, and other days it's more of a challenge, as you'll know.

I'd like to wish her well in her retirement. While it's a loss for the people of Nepean-Carleton and a loss for me personally—because she has been such a great friend—it certainly is a win for her husband, Al, her three children—Lee, Alana and Stephanie—and, most importantly to her, her three grandchildren.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Further debate.

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): My congratulations and condolences to the Minister of Energy. Congratulations on having a wonderful constituency worker like Cathy. They mean so much to the members. All of us on both sides of the House have constituency workers who are the unsung heroes of this political game. Also my condolences, because I know how difficult it is to replace someone who has done that kind of work for you in the constituency office over eight years—in fact, over your entire political career, be that as it may. She's certainly, I'm sure, going to be missed. That's something we don't

do often enough in this House: to recognize those people who work so hard on our behalf.

It's a pleasure for me to lead off the debate on the second reading of The Right Choices Act. This is the budget measures act of 2003.

It's interesting to be standing here today, because if you remember, after the reading of the budget in a warehouse in Brampton, I believe it was, this is the bill that the opposition said would never be introduced in this House. In fact, this is the bill that they said would never be debated in this House, and this is the bill that they said would never be voted on in this House. Well, they were wrong, wrong, wrong, wrong—four wrongs. They were wrong four times, because here is the bill, it has been introduced in the House, it is going to be debated in the House and before we rise it will be voted on in this House.

We are the party which understands that making a promise to the people of Ontario is indeed something that is sacred to us, and it remains that way.

As my honourable colleagues may know, this bill incorporates amendments to a number of pieces of legislation, including the Securities Act; the Income Tax Act; the Corporations Tax Act; the Assessment Act; the Municipal Act, 2001; the Community Small Business Investment Funds Act; and the Retail Sales Tax Act. So it's a very comprehensive bill. It amends a number of pieces of legislation.

The measures in this bill, if passed, would cut individual taxes. Individuals who pay tax will again get their taxes cut. In our first term of office, from 1995 to 1999, we cut personal tax rates by 30%, and to follow that up, in our second term, from 1999 until today, this will complete a 20% cut in the tax rates Ontarians pay.

This bill, if passed, will also expand the tax relief to persons with disabilities and persons who stay at home or give care to family members at home. It will give them added tax relief.

The bill also proposes amendments to statutes that would reduce taxes for persons with low and moderate incomes and provide further child care assistance for working families with young children with low or moderate incomes.

As well, the bill proposes amendments to increase investments in alternative and renewable sources of energy.

In other words, if passed, this bill would ensure that Ontario remains the best place in North America to live, work, invest and raise a family. What an attribute for a province: to be able to say that they are the number one jurisdiction in North America to live, work, raise a family and invest.

It would ensure that a prosperous future would exist for the people who live in our province. Prosperity means a growing economy that provides more and better jobs, more disposable income and more revenue to invest in our future. This in turn renews economic growth and creates even more prosperity.

That prosperity can reinvest in health care. It makes the kinds of reinvestments in health care—like the

billion-dollar fund we have set up for research into prostate and breast cancer over the next 10 years. With the human genome mapped, the progress which is going to be made in that area over the next 10 years will be phenomenal, and Ontario will be at the leading edge of that with this billion-dollar fund to lead us in that area.

It will also allow us to reinvest in education. After all, reinvesting in our children's future—there will be no greater opportunities in the world than to reinvest in our education and in our young people.

It will allow us to reinvest in our environment: to ensure that as we go forward, the environment in which we live—the land, air and water—become cleaner than they are today and indeed become some of the cleanest in North America, if not the world. That is an admirable goal, one that will satisfy the needs of our health and the future of this province and one that is attainable in today's environment.

It will also allow us to reinvest in the safety of our communities, such as the 1,000 new police officers we have hired in Ontario over the last three years and the proposed 1,000 new police officers we will be hiring over the next three or four years. There is nothing more important to Ontarians: not only to be safe in their homes and communities but to feel safe in those communities. That also is very important.

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Our economic growth has been nothing short of phenomenal. Ontario's economic plan has laid the foundation for continued job creation and economic growth. The province's economy rebounded strongly in 2002, growing by an estimated 3.9%. This was more than two and a half times the rate of the previous year, and that is because of the strong fiscal foundation we have laid in this province over the past eight years. Eight years ago this province was last in Canada; today we are first. Ontario's economy has grown and rebounded faster and stronger than any of the G7 nations because of the fiscal and economic policies this government has put in place. Tax cuts have led that strong economic policy. They have led to more jobs and more reinvestment. They have led to the prosperity we currently have in Ontario.

The current average private sector forecast for real growth in Ontario is 2.6% in 2003 and 3.4% in 2004. Strong economic fundamentals reinforced by sound fiscal policies will help maintain Ontario's healthy economic growth despite the negative impacts we've had in the last few months because of the SARS epidemic.

Because of the unexpected strength of the Canadian dollar, finally the world is recognizing that Canada and Ontario have strong economies. We have natural resources that abound in our province. Those and the people who work in Ontario give us strength that is unmatched in most other jurisdictions in the world, and the world is beginning to recognize that. That is the fundamental reason why our dollar has leapt from 63 cents to 75 cents. That's an unbelievable growth in a currency. I think it's down to about 74 cents today, but we will maintain that very strong growth.

When we came to office, we set targets. We set a target to create 725,000 new jobs over the next five years, and we exceeded that target. That was a promise made by this government. What happens when this government makes a promise? We keep it. Well, that's a promise we kept: 725,000 new jobs. By 2002, the Ontario economy had added more than a million new jobs. And do you know what happened when we added a million new jobs? A million new people were working, those people became new taxpayers and those new taxpayers sent in a whole bunch of new revenue to the government. In the past, when the Liberals, the NDP and the federal government wanted more revenue, they increased taxes; not so with this government, not so with our formula, a formula that works. We reduce taxes, increase economic activity and create new jobs. Those new jobs create new revenues, and those new revenues are reinvested in areas that Ontarians expect their government to reinvest in, such as health care, education, the environment and safe communities—the things Ontarians hold near and dear whether they live in Cornwall or Kenora. This government promised those things, and we have delivered.

Ontario gained a total of 43,000 new jobs over the first five months of 2003. In fact, that accounted for almost all the new jobs gained in Canada. Ontario created 32,000 new manufacturing jobs in 2002. That led all provinces in Canada, and it also led all 50 states in the United States. We beat them all. We produced more manufacturing jobs than every other jurisdiction in North America, because this is the finest jurisdiction in North America. With Ontario's stellar job-creation record, I'm happy to say that we remain the job-creation engine of Canada, and we are confident that lower taxes will continue to promote growth and new jobs. Of course, those new jobs will create new taxpayers; those new taxpayers will add revenue to the Ontario government; and that revenue will be reinvested in the things that Ontarians hold near and dear to them.

Thanks to tax cuts and a growing economy, family incomes are rising dramatically. The average after-tax and after-inflation income of two-parent families with children rose 19% from 1995 to 2000. As stated in the budget, continued growth and prosperity are expected in 2003-04, which will result in more new jobs, more investments in productivity, more take-home pay and more new homes for families to live in. This is good news for Ontarians.

What's more, our government is fulfilling its promise on repaying the debt. Annual deficits are a thing of the past. With the half-billion-dollar payment we made in the 2002-03 fiscal year, we have now reduced the provincial debt by over \$5 billion.

As we reported in the 2003 budget, we are on track for a balanced budget in this fiscal year, 2003-04. Through our economic and fiscal policies, this government has met or exceeded our debt-reduction targets over the eight consecutive years that we've been in government. First, we paid down the deficit at a rate that exceeded our

goals, and since that time, we have balanced every budget that we have put before the House. Every one of those budgets has involved tax cuts.

I think the members of this House who were elected in 1995 are amongst the only politicians in political history who have served in a government for eight years; and in every one of those eight years, we have given the taxpayers of this province and the taxpayers in our constituencies a reduction in their taxes. I doubt if that record is matched anywhere else in the world. It's one that I'm very proud of.

The fact is, cutting taxes, balancing budgets and creating a positive environment for investment and job creation have helped Ontario weather the somewhat stormy economic conditions in global growth and, indeed, in the global economy over the last three years.

This year's budget continues our government's commitment to create more opportunities and jobs and to build Ontario's competitiveness and productivity.

Ontario continues to be an attractive location for businesses to set up shop. Personal and corporate taxes have been lowered and barriers to investments have been eliminated. Here in Ontario we have a record of strong, broadly based economic growth. So often, people look at our economy and they see that the automotive sector demands such a huge part of our economy. Well, it's about 20%, 25% of our economy, which is a very large part. It's a wonderful business to have in our province because it has good, high-paying jobs, but it isn't the only part of our economy. We've got a strong economy in agriculture and food processing. In fact, Ontario probably has more international food processors operating in the province than any other jurisdiction in North America, outside of California.

Technology—the IT industry: there are clusters in Toronto, there are clusters in Ottawa and there are clusters in the Kitchener-Waterloo area. It's a very strong economy of good, high-paying jobs, and one which will lead in the future.

Ontario's real gross domestic product growth has exceeded that of the rest of Canada, has exceeded that of the USA and has exceeded most other countries in the industrialized world since 1995. Our manufacturing sector continues to outperform its competitors in other jurisdictions.

Over the 1996 to 2002 period, 241,000 new manufacturing jobs were created, and that also is a record—from 1996 to 2002, a quarter-million new manufacturing jobs—more than any other province, and more than any other US state, right here in Ontario. Once again, sound economic policies lead to strong, productive growth.

This government believes that higher productivity is the only enduring way to achieve a rising standard of living. I think most economists would agree with that. Economic growth and productivity are also stimulated by a positive business climate, which, in turn, makes this province an attractive location for investment. We say it's the best place in North America to invest. It's also the

best place in North America to work, to live and to raise a family.

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We continue to cut taxes; make strategic investments in education, health care, innovation and infrastructure; modernize financial regulations; reduce red tape; and eliminate other barriers to growth wherever they may exist, such as the capital tax on new equipment and new industries. Beginning to reduce and phase out that capital tax—it's a job-killing tax, actually—has stimulated the manufacturing sector in Ontario. Our policies are creating a positive business climate that contributes to the diversity and resilience of the economy.

Maintaining investor confidence in Ontario's positive economic prospects remains an important goal for this government, given the geopolitical uncertainty and the shocks to confidence resulting from the collapse of companies like Enron and other stock market developments. People in Ontario have legitimate concerns about the markets and their retirement savings. We recognize their concerns, and we're taking action to protect those areas. We have helped ensure that the Ontario Securities Commission is a strong regulator with the tools it needs to do its job and the ability to respond to challenges and changes in a rapidly moving marketplace.

As we move forward, we're looking at the economic strengths of our province, and we know, for example, that small and medium-size enterprises—companies that generally have less than 100 employees—have responded strongly to the improved tax, regulatory and general business climate. Small and medium-size enterprises led job creation, with almost half a million new jobs, almost half the new jobs in this province over the 1996-2002 period.

It is no coincidence that Ontario created more than a million net new jobs. Did I mention that before? This province has created a million net new jobs, a record for all communities, all provinces, all the US states—throughout North America—on a per capita basis. As I've mentioned before, that's a million new taxpayers. And when you have a million new taxpayers, you don't have to increase taxes. In fact, you can reduce them and that will create even more economic growth. It's such a simple formula. Business spending on machinery and equipment rose nearly 71%, and when companies buy new machinery and equipment, they also hire new employees. Real investment in commercial and industrial construction rose by 35% over that same period, and we expect healthy growth to continue in 2003-04.

Corporate profits have rebounded. There are more jobs and more taxpayers. It all comes down to a philosophy of how you want to manage the economy, of whether or not you want to manage the economy by raising taxes, controlling more of the expenditures in the gross domestic product within a province by the government increasing taxes and taking a larger share of people's incomes out of their pockets. That is the philosophy of Liberal and NDP governments. Our philosophy is simple. We get our increased revenues from increased growth, from new jobs.

With the recent slowdown in the economy throughout North America, Ontario didn't experience much of that slowdown; sure, we did a little bit. But we were the last jurisdiction to feel it and the first jurisdiction to emerge from that slowdown. That's what sound fiscal policies will do.

In the coming election, whether it's this fall or next spring, the people of Ontario will have a clear choice. They will have a choice of paying higher taxes and having fewer jobs, a choice offered by the Liberal government, or they will have a choice of paying lower taxes and having more jobs, a choice offered by this government. The choice will be made by the people of Ontario: pay more and get less, or pay less and get more.

I rest, and I have confidence that the people of Ontario will make the proper choice.

Hon Tina R. Molinari (Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): It is a pleasure for me today to rise before this House to debate the Right Choices Act (Budget Measures), 2003. As you know, this important piece of legislation would enact the measures announced in the 2003 Ontario budget, our government's fifth consecutive balanced budget. I am honoured to be a member of the government that tabled this document. With this budget, I would like to remind members that our government will have paid \$5 billion toward our debt. Because of our track record and because of economic growth that has resulted from our policies, we are also able to invest in what matters most to Ontarians: health care and education. Our government's plan to restore growth, job creation and prosperity to Ontario is working. Lower taxes, balanced budgets, reduced debt and prudent fiscal management have created more than one million net new jobs since 1995 and are making our economy more competitive.

When my honourable colleague Janet Ecker, the Minister of Finance, met with hundreds of Ontarians across the province in her pre-budget consultations, she received advice that was very helpful in developing the next steps in our plan. It was clear that health care and education continue to be the top priorities of Ontarians. There were no surprises there. But we also heard that continued tax relief is vitally important, not just because it rewards individual initiative by leaving more money in their pockets to spend, save or invest, but because they recognized that lower taxes attract and keep jobs here in Ontario. I would like to say that with today's amendments we would continue to support the people of this province with effective tax relief. Indeed, the Right Choices Act (Budget Measures), 2003, proposes a number of amendments to various statutes that are designed to cut taxes and sustain economic growth in the province.

As my honourable colleagues have mentioned, the bill proposes to cut individual taxes and enhance tax relief to persons with disabilities and their caregivers. It proposes to reduce taxes for persons with low and moderate incomes and provide further child care assistance for low- and moderate-income families with young children.

The bill also proposes amendments to increase investment in alternative and renewable sources of energy.

As well, the bill proposes amendments to the following acts: the Assessment Act, the Commodity Futures Act, the Electricity Act, 1998, the Limitations Act, 2002, the Municipal Act, 2001, and the Securities Act. In addition, the bill proposes a new statute called the Trust Beneficiaries Liability Act, 2003.

Ontario small- and medium-sized businesses will benefit as well from the amendments in today's bill. For example, the bill proposes to cut taxes for corporations in Ontario and encourage investment, particularly investment in small- and medium-sized businesses, many of which are in my riding of Thornhill. Allow me to talk about specifics on how we plan to do this.

The proposed amendments to the Community Small Business Investment Funds Act are intended to improve access to capital for small- and medium-sized businesses in the province. Labour-sponsored investment funds, which are a significant source of venture capital for small- and medium-sized businesses, would be given greater flexibility in the investments they can make. The funds would be permitted to increase their investments in listed companies. The amendments would increase the maximum asset size of an eligible business for the purposes of a small business investment requirement from \$5 million to \$6 million.

In addition, these proposed amendments would facilitate the establishment of additional community small business investment funds in Ontario. These very important funds have become a key source of capital for universities and hospitals that are commercializing research. A further amendment extends the deadline for registering a community small business investment fund from December 31, 2004.

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The Business Corporations Act authorizes the director to dissolve a corporation that is in default of its obligations under the Corporations Tax Act. The bill proposes an amendment that will give us increased powers to dissolve a corporation that is in default of its obligation under other specified tax statutes. We believe we need to clamp down on those corporations that do not comply with the law.

Tax rates in Ontario must remain competitive in order to promote consumer spending and to attract new business to our province. To that end, we are proposing a number of amendments to the Income Tax Act that would contribute to continued economic growth in this province. For example, amendments to the act would increase the threshold at which Ontario taxpayers are required to pay the provincial surtax. Effective January 1, 2004, the surtax will become payable when Ontario income tax exceeds \$4,727, as adjusted for inflation. This threshold is proposed to increase to \$5,240 as of January 1, 2005.

Our government believes that we need to help support individuals with disabilities and people who care for infirm or disabled family members. Our tax system currently provides assistance to these people through a number of non-refundable tax credits, including the disability credit, caregiver credit and infirm dependent

credit. However, the care provided by individuals for an infirm spouse or common law partner goes unrecognized by the current tax system, as do the efforts of adult children to help their infirm parents or grandparents with modest incomes remain in their own homes.

We are proposing three enhancements to these credits effective January 1, 2003. First, the amounts on which these credits are based would be increased to \$6,637. Second, we propose to extend the caregiver credit and the infirm dependent credit to include spouses or common law partners who are dependent by reason of mental or physical infirmity, and to provide support to more caregivers living apart from infirm dependent relatives. Third, we propose to raise the level of the dependent's income above which these credits would be reduced or eliminated. This means that more people would qualify for them.

We are proposing to enhance the Ontario tax reduction by increasing the amount of the basic tax reduction to \$197 plus an increase for inflation, effective January 1, 2004. In addition, we are proposing an amendment that would increase the threshold at which an individual's entitlement to the Ontario child care supplement for working families is reduced. Beginning in July 2003, this threshold would be increased from \$20,000 to \$20,750 of family net income.

Proposed amendments in the bill also support corporations in the province. As you know, capital taxes hurt businesses, especially in their early start-up years when they can least afford it. We are proposing changes to the Corporations Tax Act that will reduce capital tax rates for all corporations by 10% effective January 1, 2004. We intend to propose legislation to eliminate the job-killing capital tax by the time the federal government eliminates its capital tax.

Additional proposed tax improvements include a refundable tax credit for businesses on the salary and wages paid to an eligible apprentice in a qualified skills trade, and changes to the Ontario business research institute tax credit to improve its effectiveness.

Allow me to highlight some of our tax relief measures over the past seven and a half years. Since 1995, our government has dramatically reduced the tax burden on people and business. Tax cuts have been broadly based and have played an important role in this province's comprehensive economic policy, which was designed to support and promote job creation, innovation, entrepreneurship, economic growth and prosperity.

Our government has announced 225 tax cuts since 1995. Here is just a sampling of those tax cuts: 10 tax cuts in the 1996 budget; 20 tax cuts in the 1997 budget; eight tax cuts in the 1997-98 inter-budget announcements; 29 tax cuts in the 1998 budget; 30 tax cuts in the 1999 budget; 67 tax cuts in the 2000 budget; nine tax cuts in the 2000-01 inter-budget announcements; 17 tax cuts in the 2001 budget; eight tax cuts in the 2002 budget; eight tax cuts announced as part of the November 25, 2002, energy incentives; and 17 tax cuts in the 2003 budget.

Economic growth, spurred by tax cuts, has enabled our government to invest in priority programs and services—health care and education, the two top priorities of Ontarians. Across the province, people of all ages, backgrounds and income levels have benefited from these tax cuts. Ontario's tax cuts are the key to opportunity and prosperity.

What does this mean for Ontarians? It means more jobs and less welfare. Since 1995, our economy has created more than one million net new jobs. That's almost half the jobs created throughout Canada in the past seven years. Because of job opportunities and our work-for-welfare plan, over 600,000 people have left welfare since 1995. It means more income for families. Thanks to tax cuts and a growing economy, average family incomes are rising dramatically. The average after-tax and after-inflation income of two-parent families with children rose 19% between 1995 and 2000. It means balanced budgets and less debt. Because we made the difficult choices, annual deficits are a thing of the past. With the \$484-million payment we made in the 2002-03 fiscal year, we have now reduced the provincial debt by \$5 billion.

The fundamentals our government put in place helped us rebound from the downturn of 2001. Last year, Ontario's economy expanded by an estimated 3.9%, more than two and a half times the rate of the previous year. Private sector forecasters expect our economy to continue to grow. The current average private sector forecast for real growth is 2.6% in 2003 and 3.4% in 2004. Strong economic fundamentals reinforced by sound fiscal policies will help to maintain Ontario's healthy economic growth despite the negative economic impact of SARS and the higher-than-expected Canadian dollar.

With our economic plan in place, we will continue to move forward. The foundation of our plan is tax cuts, because they work, because they are an investment in productivity.

Let me reiterate that governments don't create wealth and prosperity; people do. It is our role as a government to create the right conditions for Ontario's citizens and businesses to flourish. Tax cuts are good for Ontario residents. They save the average family hundreds of dollars a year and have helped create more than one million net new jobs since this government's first throne speech.

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Our government has put in place a multi-year tax reduction plan to support growth and prosperity. Our past tax cuts, combined with the further reductions that were proposed in the budget, would benefit individuals and businesses by \$16 billion in 2003-04. Every one of our budgets has reduced taxes. Legislation already in place fulfills the government's commitment to completing its additional 20% reduction in personal income tax by January 1, 2004. So far Ontario's personal income tax cuts are providing \$12 billion in benefits to all individual taxpayers this year. Personal income tax cuts are part of our pro-growth plan to promote economic development

and financial security, which allows us to make further investments in our priorities, like health care and education.

Let me give you an example of how tax cuts are working for Ontario families. A family of four with \$60,000 in net income for two earners is already benefiting by \$2,125 in Ontario income tax savings this year. By next year those tax savings would rise to more than \$2,500. As well, we propose to eliminate Ontario's personal income tax for more people with modest incomes. The 2003 budget's proposal to enrich the Ontario tax reduction program would increase to 700,000 the number of people no longer paying Ontario income tax as a result of our government's personal income tax cuts since 1995.

Clearly, tax cuts are good for economic growth and prosperity. Our record has proven that time and again. Our government continues to focus on its long-term plan for competitive tax rates. We sought advice on our multi-year tax reduction plan, which included the next steps toward eliminating Ontario's income tax surtax. As most of you know, this tax is the extra tax that reduces the province's attractiveness for mobile professionals and managers to work and invest. Beginning January 1, 2004, the surtax will be eliminated for those who pay only the first tier. The 2003 budget proposes to raise the surtax threshold effective January 1, 2005, so that the lowest-income person paying the surtax would have taxable income of about \$75,000.

This government believes that eliminating the surtax would improve Ontario's ability to attract and retain skilled workers and increase incentives for investors. Lower taxes are equally important to Ontario's small and medium-sized businesses, the backbone of our economy. We will continue to lower their taxes as well. Many businesses in my riding of Thornhill appreciate this government's steps toward tax cuts. We will do this by lowering the small business tax rate from the current level of 5.5% down to 4% on January 1, 2005.

What this means is that more money will be left in the hands of more than 125,000 businesses to invest and create more jobs. In fact, a significant factor in the resilience and flexibility of our economy is this government's focus on cutting taxes. We have shown that cutting taxes invigorates our economy. It gives both entrepreneurs and employees the incentive they need to expand, invest and create jobs.

We know for a fact that lower small-business taxes create jobs. Between the period 1990 to 1995, under higher taxes, Ontario's small and medium-sized businesses laid off a net 69,000 workers. Between 1995 and 2002, with lower taxes, small and medium-sized businesses have hired 478,000 net new workers.

We will continue to reduce the general corporate income tax rate too, from the current level of 12.5% to 8% by the beginning of 2006. Meanwhile the manufacturing and processing tax will be lowered by 11% today, down to 8% at the start of 2006.

The importance of competitive business tax rates in attracting investment is confirmed by experience around

the world. Indeed, one US study found that a difference of only 1% in tax rates increased business investment by 9% to 11%.

Members of this House may recall that when our government first brought in our tax cut plan, critics said it would kill government revenues, but they were wrong. In the coming year, our tax revenues are expected to be \$16 billion higher than when we started cutting taxes. Increased revenue has allowed us to invest in the health care and education programs that support Ontario's prosperity and quality of life—key parts of our competitive edge.

These days, many of us have family or friends struggling with the challenge of caring for elderly or dependent parents and relatives, so we are acting to recognize the higher costs faced by these family caregivers. Our tax system currently provides tax assistance for people in these situations. However, this year's budget would enhance the support and bring \$50 million in benefits to approximately 165,000 Ontario taxpayers.

As I mentioned earlier, we are proposing to increase the amount of the disability tax credit, caregiver tax credit, infirm dependant tax credit and disability credit supplement for children with severe disabilities; expand eligibility for the caregiver and infirm dependant tax credit to include spouses or common-law partners who are dependent by reason of a mental or physical infirmity and provide support for more caregivers living apart from dependant relatives; and increase the threshold for the dependant's income above which the caregiver and infirm dependent credits are reduced. This means that more people would qualify for them.

We announced several other tax relief measures in this budget. Let me talk about those at this time.

To further encourage electricity self-sufficiency, our 2003 budget proposes an additional 100% income tax deduction to Ontario corporations for the cost of qualifying assets used to generate their own electricity from alternative or renewable energy sources.

Other energy-related initiatives in the 2003 budget include: a proposed expansion of the five-year retail sales tax rebate for solar energy systems, which we announced last November, to include wind energy systems, micro-hydroelectric systems and geothermal heating and cooling systems if purchased and incorporated into residential premises after March 27, 2003, and before November 26, 2007; and a proposed doubling of the retail sales tax rebate for qualifying alternative fuel vehicles to \$2,000 for vehicles purchased by or delivered to the purchasers after March 27, 2003. The maximum rebate for propane vehicles remains at \$750.

As I mentioned, the tax measures outlined in the 2003 budget continue our work to ensure Ontario remains on the path to prosperity. Budgets are about setting priorities and making choices. Our government has made these priorities and choices very clear: lower taxes to keep Ontario's economy strong, competitive and growing, to create more jobs and higher incomes; increased support for caregivers, seniors and children; health care we can

all depend on, where we need it and when we need it; an accountable education system that provides our young people with the knowledge and skills they need for success; and colleges and universities that prepare our students for the opportunities of a lifetime.

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We will continue with our economic plan, and that plan includes cutting taxes. Cutting taxes stimulates our economy.

Ontario continues to be the number one place in North America to do business. Through our government's commitment to tax cuts, debt reduction, strategic investments in health care and education, innovation and infrastructure, modernizing financial regulations, reducing red tape and eliminating other barriers to growth, we believe there is simply no better place to open up shop than here in Ontario.

Private sector forecasters, on average, project the Ontario economy will grow by 2.6% in 2003 and 3.4% in 2004. This rate is faster than any of the G7 nations in this two-year period.

Ontario has been the leader in reducing taxes and removing barriers to growth and job creation. This has contributed to the province's impressive economic record. Our economic foundation is strong. Our businesses are more competitive than ever before. Inflation is in check, interest rates are low and after-tax incomes are rising. Sound policies will continue to strengthen these fundamentals. Balanced budgets, tax cuts and positive business conditions have created a climate that is stimulating economic growth and raising living standards.

Our economic plan is working. It's a plan to continue the growth and prosperity our government has put in place since 1995. It's a plan to secure a strong and successful future for Ontario.

I know all the members in this House want to secure a successful future in Ontario, and if that is in fact the case, then they will see the benefits of this budget we are proposing here today.

The Deputy Speaker: Just before we start questions and comments, if I could, Kristian is a page to my right. He's sitting in between these other two pages. There is absolutely no way I can introduce his family that is in the west gallery, but if I could have, he would have liked me to have mentioned that he comes from, of course, the riding of St Paul's, represented by Michael Bryant, and that his mom Donna is in the gallery. He would have wanted me to also mention that his aunts Itta, Lucy and Ippi are there too, and especially to Itta, I'd like to say welcome.

Questions and comments?

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I hope the member will respond to my comments. I've had many phone calls from people who said, "Listen, in 1999, when Mr Eves was running, he promised me a 20% cut in my property tax. Now I understand he's cancelled the last half of it. He's not even going to proceed with it." This person said, "I've kept a copy of it, and it said, 'We'll cut the provincial portion of residential property taxes by 20%, phased in over our next term.

We'll make it mandatory for owners of rental units. The tax cut will put \$500 million in the hands of individuals.' I understand from the minister that they've cancelled the last half of that tax cut. That was a pretty solemn promise, and I hope you have an answer for why you've cancelled it."

The second thing I'd say is that it was only a year ago that the Minister of Finance got up and said, "Well, because of our fiscal situation, the Ontario government has made the decision to reschedule certain major planned tax cuts." Then they said, "How can we justify breaking the Taxpayer Protection Act?" which they had to do. As you remember, Mr Eves had to bring in legislation to say, "Sorry, we didn't mean it. We don't believe in the Taxpayer Protection Act. We are going to pass legislation allowing us not to proceed with \$1.5 billion in tax cuts." The government said, "The reason we had to do that was to meet the target of a fourth balanced budget."

I look forward to the answer to my constituents, who want to know why they're not getting the 10% cut in their property taxes that was promised in 1999—and now they've been told that's cancelled—and why the Taxpayer Protection Act, which they thought the government believed in, was changed through a little act last year to cancel \$1.5 billion in tax cuts. I look forward to the response.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): The junior minister said, "Let me tell you how the tax cuts work." I want to give another example of how the tax cuts work, for the benefit of taxpayers who are watching.

A bank president who earns \$1.5 million or so—most presidents earn that amount in salary alone. Any bank president who earns that kind of salary would get \$120,000 back at the end of the year because of the glorious income tax cuts these people praise. These poor presidents of these poor banks would get back \$120,000 to help them out because they're starving, and this government, the Conservative government, is helping out these poor bank presidents because they need more money in their pockets. That's what this tax cut has been about over the last eight years.

Remember, when they talk about a balanced budget, they've got to recover \$2.2 billion by selling off assets in order to balance the budget. This is before SARS; this is before the rising Canadian dollar; this is during the slowdown of the American economy. Federally, it means a loss of \$1 billion or \$1.5 billion. Imagine what this means in Ontario. Imagine how these people are going to balance the budget, should they get elected. They can't.

Ten billion dollars has been going out every year to service these tax cuts that go to wealthy people who don't need my support and don't need the support of taxpayers in this province; \$10 billion is going out every year, putting at risk our health care system, our education system and our environment, as we've seen in Walkerton. Do we need more of those tax cuts? I say no. We need to save ourselves from this government.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Any time there's a speech made on the budget, what is not men-

tioned in the speech is always rather interesting. I've been eagerly awaiting the substantial increase in payments to those on ODSP, the Ontario program that assists people with disabilities, because they've not had an increase for some 10 years in the allocation for them on an individual basis. Many have called to ask whether at least the amount of inflation over those 10 years would be reflected in an increase. I have not yet found any specific figure from the government, but I do hope that at long last, even if it's conscience money, we will see money going to people on disability.

As well, I hope the government would revise its budget plans as they relate to people with macular degeneration. After two years, the government finally made an announcement. We in the opposition and others in our society implored the government to cover the treatment for macular degeneration under OHIP. Finally, the government was dragged kicking and screaming into doing so, but after the big announcement we found out there are many strict rules that prevent many people from getting that financial assistance, the coverage. They have to be at least 50% blind before they can get coverage.

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I also note that in this budget there is nothing to assist people who are having great problems with insurance. There are two basic problems with insurance: first, the premiums are going out of sight for people in my constituency and others, and second, and as important to them, is the fact that they're unable to get insurance; many people will not insure them again. We're not simply talking about auto insurance; we're talking about all kinds of insurance now. I think it's something the government is going to have to address or they may face what Premier Bernard Lord faced in New Brunswick.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I guess the people of Ontario have to ask themselves, after eight years of tax cuts and more cuts, are they really better off? Are their schools better off? Are their hospitals better? Is their health care better? Are city services better? Almost everybody except the Conservatives agrees that the reckless tax cuts and cuts have really put a heavy burden on our schools, our hospitals and our cities, so we have fewer services. We know that when they say "tax cuts," they mean service cuts. That's what a tax cut means. You get your services cut to pay for the tax cuts that go to Frank Stronach. The top 1% in Ontario get all these tax cuts. Guess who pays for them? It's everybody else who pays for them through cuts in services. Services are what nurses provide, and they are proud of firing 10,000 nurses. You see the consequences of firing 10,000 nurses. So those are the promises they're making in this budget again.

As I've said before, it's no accident they did this budget at the feet of Frank Stronach up at Magna in Brampton. They did it up there because they wanted to please the likes of Frank Stronach. That's why they're doing their so-called seniors' tax cut. Most of the money will be going to Frank Stronach, who is going to get a cheque for \$50,000 from Ernie Eves. Ernie Eves is going to send Frank Stronach a \$50,000 cheque that will come

from the cuts in home care, school textbooks and nursing care. They're going to write Frank Stronach a \$50,000 cheque with this budget. That's what they're saying the people of Ontario should buy.

Hon Mrs Molinari: I'm again pleased to comment here on some of the comments that have been made by the other speakers.

This is a bill that recognizes, as I said in my comments, the tax cuts and what tax cuts have created for the province in the way of economic growth and in the way of putting more money into people's pockets so that they are able to spend the money the way they best see fit. They know how to spend their money much better than any government would be able to spend their money. Keep in mind that our priority issues are still taken into account and that tax cuts are creating the kind of economy that we need, that increases the revenue for Ontario, which allows us to provide more money to our priority areas such as health care and education.

In Thornhill, one of the tax cuts that is very welcomed and one of the most popular ones is our equity in education tax credit for the constituents in my riding of Thornhill. There are a number of schools in my riding—Associated Hebrew, Leo Baeck, Netivot and a number of other schools—I won't list them all, but I must tell you that all of the parents of the kids who go to these schools are very happy with the policies of this government, a government that finally recognizes that these parents have been paying education taxes throughout all the number of years they've been paying taxes, and they've also been paying tuition for their kids who go to these schools.

What this does is give parents choice. A lot of the parents in my riding of Thornhill don't have a choice. Public education is not a choice for them because public education does not offer them the type of religious education and the type of environment they need to be able to respond to their ethnicity and their religion. So my constituents in Thornhill are very happy that this government, this Premier, Ernie Eves, has recognized the fact that there was an inequity in this province and the inequity was that Catholic schools and public schools were funded fully with the new funding model. Now other children also get the benefit of that funding.

Mr Phillips: I think I should acknowledge that I'll be sharing my time with the member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale.

I'm pleased to continue the debate on—I think this is the third budget bill that we're dealing with. This is the larger bill dealing with many different acts.

Just to follow up on some of the comments made by my colleagues across the way, I just think it's important that the public recognize that Mr Eves has now been in charge of the finances of the province for close to eight years; actually, more than eight years now.

I take out the budget. This is the most recent one, the one that was never presented here. It was presented, strangely enough, at a private company a few kilometres away from the Legislature.

I notice that the debt of the province has gone—as of March 31, 1995, a few months before the government came in, the debt was \$90.7 billion. I see now that it's \$111.7 billion. It's gone up \$21 billion since they came into office. That's 23% that the debt of the province has increased.

The government talks about tax cuts, but I'll just say that the way Alberta handled tax cuts was they said, "Listen, we're going to balance our books before we begin to cut taxes," and they did that.

Mr Eves borrowed at least \$10 billion to fund the tax cuts, so \$10 billion of this \$21 billion in debt that went up was as a result of saying, "We're going to proceed with tax cuts before the books are balanced." It's the only government in Canada that did that. Consequently, we're faced now with a debt of \$21 billion here.

The credit rating agencies have commented on this. In 1990, the province of Ontario had an AAA credit rating. It was downgraded three times under the NDP. From AAA it went to AA+, AA and AA-. Here we are now, eight years later, and the province has had only one upgrade. We are still two levels below where we were in 1990. This costs us an enormous amount of money in increased interest costs. Mr Flaherty, when he was the Minister of Finance, said that it apparently cost us about one quarter of 1%—"25 basis points" is the jargon that's used—for every interest downgrade. So we're paying about one-half of 1% increase in interest costs on our debt as a consequence of the government not being able to get our credit rating back to where it was in 1990.

They've now had more than eight years, and the credit rating agencies—as a matter of fact, two of the credit rating agencies have commented. There are three major ones; Standard and Poor's and Dominion Bond Rating have both commented on this year's budget. Dominion Bond Rating said—and the reason I raise this is to respond to some of the comments that the members across have made on this budget bill. Here's what the credit rating agencies say. DBRS says, "Ontario could face a ... deficit of \$1.9 billion in 2003-04, compared to a shortfall—a deficit last year—"of \$572 million." Then they comment on next year: "Despite government optimism, balancing next year's budget will likely pose challenges. Revenue growth is likely to slow markedly as a result of the tax cuts planned for January 2004."

Standard and Poor's say that in their opinion, the province appears to be on track this year to post a deficit of roughly 1.7% of revenues. That's about \$1.2 billion.

Here we are now, eight years after they've got into office. We find that the debt of the province is \$21 billion higher than it was when they took office. We find that the credit rating is still dramatically lower than it was in 1990. We find that the bond rating agencies that have commented on the fiscal plan—by the way, both of them commented before the impact of SARS was felt—said that the province is really running a significant deficit.

1640

I've always been interested in the comments on tax cuts because, for one thing, I always say to people, "Listen, don't accept what they say about tax cuts." This

is the campaign they ran on in 1999, and I remember very well my opponent getting quite a few votes on the basis of these promises. They said, "We'll cut Ontario's income tax rate by another 20%." It still hasn't been done. The government's saying, "We will complete this January 1, 2004." It's still not done, though.

On the property tax, they said, "We'll cut the provincial portion of residential property taxes by 20%." So everybody was promised, all of the people of Ontario were promised they were going to cut the residential property taxes by 20%. Well, guess what? The minister recently said, "I'm sorry; we're not going to do that. As a matter of fact, we're cancelling it. You're not going to get the last half of that cut. We simply have decided we're not going to go ahead with it." It's gone. So all of those people who voted for the Conservatives on the basis of, "We're going to cut everybody's residential property tax by 20%"—the first 10% was done just at the last election, and they said, "We'll cut it another 10%." They decided to cancel it, completely cancel it. It's \$250 million of tax cuts that were promised for everybody in the province of Ontario, and it's gone. Why is that? It's because they simply will make a promise to get elected and then if they don't want to do it, they'll abandon it.

As a matter of fact, it was just a year ago when—this is what the minister said in the budget. There was \$1.5 billion of tax cuts. Actually, they were not only promised, it was in legislation. The government said then, "Well, because of the fiscal situation, the Ontario government has made the decision to reschedule certain major planned tax cuts." You see, we couldn't afford them. We could not afford to proceed with the tax cuts. What they'll often say is, "These tax cuts pay for themselves. They simply pay for themselves." That's not the case, and the evidence of that is in their own budget, where they say, "We have to cancel these tax cuts, because we can't afford it."

I remember very clearly this issue, because I was asked to appear on a television program called Focus Ontario, a well-known program that airs Saturday evenings. It was just before the budget a year ago. The person who was interviewing me said, "We're hearing rumours that they might cancel those tax cuts that they've legislated effective January 1, 2003. Do you think they will?" I said, "No way. They will go ahead with those tax cuts." "Why is that?" I said, "Because if they don't, they're breaking the law. They passed a law called the Taxpayer Protection Act. If they don't proceed with the tax cuts, they're breaking the law." The person said to me, "If they don't proceed with them, will you eat your hat?" I said, "Yes, I will eat my hat, because I'm convinced they will obey their own law." As a matter of fact, that was a big part of the Conservative government getting elected last time: "We're going to have this Taxpayer Protection Act that will, in legislation, protect you from any government trying to not proceed with legislated tax cuts." So I said I'd eat my hat.

Well, I was amazed when the budget came out and they said, "We're not proceeding with \$1.5 billion of tax

cuts." They brought in here a one-page bill, Bill 109, that said, "Sorry, we are going to amend the Taxpayer Protection Act."

This is the document the government put out. It's called the Official Newsletter of the Ontario PC Party: Questions and Answers for the Members of the PC Party. Number one question: How can the government justify breaking the Taxpayer Protection Act by delaying tax cuts? Well, the government itself said the rationale for it is that to meet the target of a fourth balanced budget, the government delayed for one year scheduled reductions in a number of tax rates.

So here we are, the government's saying—

Interjection.

Mr Phillips: The member for Scarborough Centre is heckling me, and I'll just say to her, your opponent is going to challenge you on that.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. If you'll give me a minute, your debate speech is interrupting the heckling. Talking back and forth is not allowed and we can't have it. So I'd like you to stop.

Mr Phillips: I would say that all the members of the government are going to be challenged on this during the election, because I remember my opponent saying, "We are going to cut your residential education property tax by 20%, and you can count on us doing that."

It was just a few weeks ago that the minister said, "Sorry, we're abandoning that. We're not going to proceed with that. I know we promised that, but it's not going ahead. You're not going to get that. Sorry, we're just going to break our word." Then it was just a year ago that the 2002 budget was presented, June last year. There they said, "Sorry, we can't afford the tax cuts that were in legislation, and we're not going ahead with them. Not only that, we're going to break our Taxpayer Protection Act, and the way we'll do that is, we'll just bring a little piece of legislation in here that will allow us to not proceed with it." Why was that? Why did they not proceed with it? Because they couldn't afford it.

To meet the target of a fourth balanced budget, the government delayed these tax cuts. So I say to the people of Ontario, take their promises with the same seriousness that apparently they did, that is, promised here, a 20% cut in residential education property tax—gone; promised, \$1.5 billion of tax cuts, January 1, 2003—gone. I find it ironic, passing strange as they say—

Interjection.

Mr Phillips: The member for Scarborough Centre is still heckling, Mr Speaker, but she's going to have to answer this question during the election.

Interjection.

Mr Phillips: Wait a minute. You got elected on this famous Taxpayer Protection Act and then you simply abandoned it. Ms Mushinski and the rest of the government simply abandoned the Taxpayer Protection Act. I find it interesting now: they are going to hold the municipalities to the Taxpayer Protection Act. If they want to ever increase taxes, they're going to have to go to referendum. That's not a standard the government holds itself

to. If they want to abandon the Taxpayer Protection Act, they simply come in here and they pass a one-page piece of legislation.

Interjection.

Mr Phillips: I know Ms Mushinski doesn't want to hear this. I know this is not something she's going to want to defend when she's running in the campaign, but you're going to have to. You're going to have to defend this, and it's indefensible.

I want to move on now to dealing with the budget bill in two or three areas. I remember this document. Maybe I'm sensitive because they won, we lost, and they won on the basis of making these promises.

Interjection.

Mr Phillips: Ms Mushinski is heckling again. I appreciate that she does not want to have to defend these things, but what the piece of legislation does is, it abandons something called the fair share health levy.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Scarborough Centre, come to order.

Mr Phillips: I appreciate that, Mr Speaker. She does not want to hear this, but luckily there are rules in the House, and when we have a chance to speak, we should be given that chance. I appreciate your fine job in making sure we do.

1650

Here's how the government got elected. This is what they said then, in 1995: "We believe the new fair share health levy, based on ability to pay, meets the test of fairness and the requirements of the Canada Health Act while protecting the fundamental integrity of our health care system." Do you know what we're dealing with today? The government is abandoning the fair share health levy.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Scarborough Centre, I'll not warn you again.

Mr Phillips: It was the way by which they got elected in 1995, saying that the fair share health levy is the fairest way to fund health care. I noticed about two years ago they stopped using the term "fair share health levy" and they started calling it a "surtax," and this budget bill eliminates one of the two fair share health levies.

I smile to myself when the government says, "We'll do what we promised we'd do." Oh, yes: they promised the residential education property tax—gone; they promised a billion and a half dollars of tax cuts on January 1—gone; they promised this fair share health levy as the best, fairest way to fund health care—gone.

I also want to talk about where we are now with our budget, after eight years of Mr Eves at the helm of our finances. The only way we're balancing this year's budget is by selling off \$2.2 billion worth of provincial assets. The government has refused to tell the people of Ontario what they're going to be. They've refused to do that. Ms Mushinski can't tell me, the Minister of Finance can't tell me—

Interjection.

Mr Phillips: —nobody will tell us what those are. The reason we're so suspicious is because it was—

The Deputy Speaker: I'm naming the member for Scarborough Centre, Ms Mushinski.

Ms Mushinski was escorted from the chamber.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Scarborough-Agincourt.

Mr Phillips: Here we are after eight years of Mr Eves being at the helm, managing the finances of the province, and what do we have now? We find that the only way we can balance the books this year is by selling \$2.2 billion worth of assets.

Frankly, what makes us so suspicious of this is that we saw this before. The election was called on May 5, 1999. I remember that because that was the day the 407 was sold. Literally, the cheque arrived here for the 407 and then the election was called, and for the last four years the 407 users have been ripped off royally. I remember that the government announced, "We've got toll control. The tolls can go up 2% plus inflation." Well, that was not the case. Tolls in some cases have gone from four cents to 12 cents. The users of that road have been royally ripped off. I say to my friends living out in the Oshawa area who are eagerly awaiting the 407, do you know that it's going to cost you \$4,000 a year to drive that road? It's a mixed blessing. It will come, but you're going to have to lay out \$4,000 a year to get on the road to drive into Toronto every day.

That's why we're so suspicious of this \$2.2 billion worth of assets. Asset sales, so that the public understands, normally go along at about \$400 million a year. They have been bumped up to \$2.2 billion. What is it?

The second big issue in the budget is that the government has assumed \$800 million worth of savings. They've said, "Listen, we're going to balance the books. We're going to find \$800 million worth of savings." They haven't identified any of that. The normal number in the budget is \$200 million to \$300 million. I sort of smile to myself; they're going to find \$800 million of savings. They've been in office for eight years. Surely they've rooted out the bulk of the waste in the system by now. If they could find \$300 million in the early years, they're now going to find \$800 million? Like, what have you been doing for eight years, that you can find \$800 million of savings? By the way, once again we say to them: show us where you're going to find the savings. Nothing. We have nothing from them on where they're going to find the savings. They've assumed—the budget was built on 3% real growth. By the way—today is the first time I'd heard—one of the cabinet ministers said that the private forecasters are now down to 2.6% real growth, and in this budget the private forecasters were well above 3% three months ago. If in fact the economy is now going to perform half a per cent lower than the budget estimate, that is another \$310 million of forgone revenue. In this document the government says that for every one-point reduction in the gross domestic product, the province loses \$620 million.

So here we are now, eight years after Mr Eves took charge of the finances, and we've got a serious fiscal problem on our hands, with no manoeuvring room, nowhere to turn. I've talked about what the rating agencies have said as a result of the impact of these budget bills, and the two that have commented have said that in their opinion we're running a real deficit. By the way, they commented before the impact of SARS, which is having obviously a profound impact.

I don't think there's any doubt that when you add up all of those things, we face at least a \$2-billion deficit problem this year. I said to the Minister of Finance yesterday, "How are you going to deal with this? To the best of my thinking, you've got two ways of dealing with it: you cut spending or you find ways to increase revenues by delaying tax cuts." I said, "Will you at least assure the people of Ontario that one of the considerations is to delay tax cuts so that you don't deal with this problem simply by slashing programs?" I think people in Ontario recognize that basically the budget of Ontario is health, education and what I call law and order—our police organizations, our Attorney General, our correctional services. Will you at least assure the people of Ontario that you're prepared to look at delaying tax cuts?

I use last year's example because last year what the minister said was that because of the fiscal situation—that is, we were faced with a fiscal problem—the Ontario government has made the decision to reschedule several major planned tax cuts. Well, why did they do that last year? Because the revenue wasn't there. Because they knew that there was not going to be the money to fund the tax cuts, and they delayed the tax cuts.

I know some government members like to say, "Well, these tax cuts pay for themselves. We cut the taxes, and it's like a money-making machine." But the evidence of it is different. The evidence is what the minister said last year: "In order to deal with our fiscal situation, a growing fiscal problem, we are going to delay the tax cuts." I simply said to the minister, "Are you prepared to look at that as one of the things you're prepared to do?" Of course, heading into an election now, they're convinced that all you have to do is say, "Listen, we're going to give you a tax cut," and you can get re-elected. But I say to the people of Ontario, there's no magic in how this problem is going to have to be dealt with. There are really only two areas to look at, and that is, finding ways to minimize the revenue loss and finding ways to reduce expenditures. Last year the evidence was that they delayed the tax cuts in order to deal with the problem.

I might say that the problem becomes perhaps more acute—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Would you stop the clock, please.

1700

MEMBER'S COMMENTS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): On a point of

order, Mr Speaker: I'm sorry to interrupt the member's speech in mid-term, but this may take some time in the Legislature this afternoon.

This afternoon, the Leader of the Opposition named five young people who are now deceased, some of whom were young offenders.

I have been talking with my chief prosecutor and with various other legal people in my department, and there was some thought that there may have been a breach of law here.

In order to maintain our laws and ensure that the names of these particular individuals are not published in Hansard, I would suggest that perhaps we take some remedy this afternoon to ensure that there has not been a breach of law here, and that we therefore take some immediate action to expunge these names from the record to ensure that a breach of their privacy has not occurred.

Notwithstanding the standing orders and we are standing now, I would seek unanimous support to put forward a motion to expunge these names from the record until any investigation into this matter has been completed.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Would you like to speak on this? The chair recognizes the member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale.

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): I think it's pretty important to put on the record to the minister opposite who has brought this forward that the names that were referenced are names that have been repeatedly carried in the public domain, in newspapers and media across the province of Ontario and in this report. To prejudge by expunging, as you've called for, would be, I think, an inappropriate step.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): This is a most regrettable and unfortunate matter. The House is not unfamiliar with it, however. The House will recall that on two previous occasions, and one was the matter of the reading of the throne speech—again, I think one concedes that the motive of the speaker in this instance was benign. In the instance of a throne speech, as I recall, it was then-Minister Runciman who found himself under investigation; he eventually was cleared. As I recall, Mr Runciman similarly did the honourable thing and removed himself from his position. That was an instance where it wasn't he who authored the throne speech. Nobody suggested or pretended that he authored, nor did he read, the throne speech, and similarly, nor did he utter the words; that is to say, the identification of, yes, what were young offenders.

The second instance was one where I recall being in the House as well, when a government member, one Mr Galt, the member for Northumberland, was reading from a graduation program of a facility that contained young offenders. I recall that in that instance I took the floor and there was an investigation commenced. Once again nobody suggested that the member from Northumberland was being anything more or less than benign in reading it. He persisted in doing it but was given the opportunity to correct the record at the time, but that's a different issue.

I recall that the matter then underwent a thorough investigation. Charges were not laid in either of those instances, but I think what's interesting in this instance—and it's most regrettable. I, quite frankly, understand the motive of the leader of the Liberal Party in wanting to read those names. He was making a point. It's acknowledged that those names that were published in the newspaper were very much a matter of public record. It wasn't a matter of this being a revelation of any sort. In fact in this instance, as I understand it, there's some notoriety, and that notoriety doesn't attach to the character of the deceased young people who were named. But the matter has been the subject of much debate in this House. It's been the matter of many questions in the House. It's been the matter of any number of public reports.

What I would invite in this instance is an opportunity for House leaders to discuss a resolution of the matter, that would address the matter. I suggest we could do that promptly now, in view of the fact that there's precedent, in view of the fact that we've seen what the results were that flowed from previous instances. I would submit that a House leaders' meeting, a House leaders' conference—it would be interesting, quite frankly, to see if we could arrive at a resolution to this that would address the interests of the purported named young offenders. It's naive to talk about alleged young offenders at this point; it's trite. But I suggest that that might be a resolution at this point.

The Deputy Speaker: I'm looking for the direction of the House. Because it's been requested for unanimous consent, I'm willing to take a short recess, if you would prefer that meeting before the motion be put rather than afterwards.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Just with respect to the name that has been referenced—and certainly we can adjourn—the individual has been named also by Mr Hampton in the reference and has appeared in every major newspaper in the province, as I understand it. I just want that to be put out there as well.

Hon Mr Sterling: There are five names that were mentioned specifically this afternoon. I think the House leader would be quite willing to recess for a short period of time. I only raise it because I think it's important to act with some haste if we are going to do something about this particular matter.

Mr Duncan: We certainly would be prepared to recess. It should also be noted that the other names have also appeared in most of the periodicals in the province. These are not names that have not been in the public domain.

The Deputy Speaker: We will have a five-minute recess.

The House recessed from 1709 to 1716.

The Deputy Speaker: I will be declaring another five-minute recess.

The House recessed from 1716 to 1722.

The Deputy Speaker: There will be another five-minute recess.

The House recessed from 1722 to 1728.

The Deputy Speaker: There will be another five-minute recess.

The House recessed from 1728 to 1734.

The Deputy Speaker: There will now be a 10-minute recess.

The House recessed from 1734 to 1745.

The Deputy Speaker: There will be a five-minute recess.

The House recessed from 1745 to 1750.

The Deputy Speaker: I think the parties involved are getting very close to resolving it, so we will just suspend the Legislature. I'll stay in the Chair until we're ready to proceed, and then we will proceed.

The House suspended proceedings from 1750 to 1758.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Niagara Centre.

Mr Kormos: Here we are, Speaker. We have but three minutes left for this House to sit. The House leaders have had discussions. I am concerned about the publication of the names that were uttered. I'm not about to make judgment around how it was that they came to be uttered or whether or not that in and of itself—I made reference to two previous instances, and I think this House should be concerned about the fact that the names are being published when there is any doubt about the appropriateness of that.

Mr Duncan: Mr Speaker, we are not prepared to support any motion at this time. We've just had advice from the director of crown attorneys that the government doesn't even know what act may have been violated at this point and they're simply looking at it. I again want to emphasize that in the case of the one individual, he has been referenced in Hansard 11 times, including by Mr Runciman, including by Mr Hampton, including by others. The other four names have appeared in various publications, major national publications, on numerous occasions. Accordingly, the official opposition is not prepared to support any motion at this time.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, like the House leader from the third party, I don't take a position on this. I don't know—I don't think anyone can say that they know—whether there's jeopardy. It is a concern, though; it has been raised as a concern. Obviously, the issue would be the Young Offenders Act, the specific point you said.

I'd like to ask for unanimous consent for the House to sit past 6 o'clock so that the House leaders could once again meet and confer on this very, very important issue. I don't make any specific allegation—I don't know—but I am, like the House leader from the third party, deeply concerned about this issue. I'd ask for unanimous consent that we sit past 6 o'clock.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there consent? There is not consent.

It being almost 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 next Monday.

The House adjourned at 1800.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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 Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr
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Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
Ancaster-Dundas-	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Marie (L)
Flamborough-Aldershot		Hamilton West / -Ouest	Christopherson, David (ND)
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Beaches-East York	Prue, Michael (ND)	Lennox and Addington	
Bramalea-Gore-Malton-	Gill, Raminder (PC)	Huron-Bruce	Johns, Hon / L'hon Helen (PC)
Springdale			Minister of Agriculture and Food /
Brampton Centre / -Centre	Spina, Joseph (PC)		ministre de l'Agriculture et de
Brampton West-Mississauga /	Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC)		l'Alimentation
Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée	Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)		Gerretsen, John (L)
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	
Burlington	Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC)
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)		Deputy Premier, Minister of Education /
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)		vice-première ministre, ministre de
Don Valley East / -Est	Caplan, David (L)		l'Éducation
Don Valley West / -Ouest	Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
	Associate Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation / ministre associé de l'Entreprise, des Débouchés et de l'Innovation	Lanark-Carleton	Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC)
			Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Dufferin-Peel-	Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC) Minister of Public Safety and Security / ministre de la Sécurité et de la Sécurité publique
Wellington-Grey			Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC)
Durham	O'Toole, John R. (PC)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Eglinton-Lawrence	Colle, Mike (L)		Wood, Bob (PC)
Elgin-Middlesex-London	Peters, Steve (L)	London West / -Ouest	Mazzilli, Frank (PC)
Erie-Lincoln	Hudak, Hon / L'hon Tim (PC)	London-Fanshawe	Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC)
	Minister of Consumer and Business Services / ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises	Markham	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture / président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement, ministre de la Culture
Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L)		Sampson, Rob (PC)
Etobicoke Centre / -Centre	Stockwell, Chris (PC)	Mississauga Centre / -Centre	DeFaria, Hon / L'hon Carl (PC)
Etobicoke North / -Nord	Hastings, John (PC)	Mississauga East / -Est	Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Affaires civiques, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)		Marland, Margaret (PC)
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)		
Guelph-Wellington	Elliott, Hon / L'hon Brenda (PC)		
	Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services / ministre des Services à la collectivité, à la famille et à l'enfance		
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)		
Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Hodgson, Chris (PC)	Mississauga South / -Sud	
Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)		

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Nepean-Carleton	Baird, Hon / L'hon John R. (PC) Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, government House leader / ministre de l'Énergie, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones, parlementaire du gouvernement	Scarborough Southwest / -Sud-Ouest	Newman, Hon / L'hon Dan (PC) Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre associé de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Niagara Centre / -Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Alvin (L)
Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)	Simcoe North / -Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)
Nipissing	McDonald, AL (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Minister of the Environment / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines, ministre de l'Environnement
Northumberland	Galt, Hon / L'hon Doug (PC) Minister without Portfolio, chief government whip / ministre sans portefeuille, whip en chef du gouvernement	St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)
Oak Ridges	Klees, Hon / L'hon Frank (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	St Paul's	Bryant, Michael (L)
Oakville	Carr, Hon / L'hon Gary (PC) Speaker / Président	Stoney Creek	Clark, Hon / L'hon Brad (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Oshawa	Ouellette, Hon / L'hon Jerry J. (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles	Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh	Cleary, John C. (L)
Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Ottawa-Orléans	Coburn, Hon / L'hon Brian (PC) Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs	Thornhill	Molinari, Hon / L'hon Tina R. (PC) Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre associée des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	McLeod, Lyn (L)
Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / -Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Ottawa-Vanier	Boyer, Claudette (Ind)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Ramsay, David (L)
Oxford	Hardeman, Hon / L'hon Ernie (PC) Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre associé des Affaires municipales et du Logement	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Parkdale-High Park	Kennedy, Gerard (L)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Smitherman, George (L)
Parry Sound-Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)	Toronto-Danforth	Churley, Marilyn (ND)
Perth-Middlesex	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Trinity-Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Sorbara, Greg (L)
Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC) Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances	Waterloo-Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC)
Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Whitby-Ajax	Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation / ministre de l'Entreprise, des Débouchés et de l'Innovation
Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Willowdale	Young, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Windsor West / -Ouest	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
Sault Ste Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)	Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Dwight (L)
Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)	York Centre / -Centre	Kwinter, Monte (L)
Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)	York North / -Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)
		Mississauga West / -Ouest	Vacant

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Fourth Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Quatrième session, 37^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 23 June 2003

Lundi 23 juin 2003



Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 23 June 2003

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 23 juin 2003

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

IMMIGRANTS

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): Statistics Canada released some very interesting figures that the Minister of Citizenship must take note of. The poverty rate among immigrants has risen by almost 12%, from 24.6% two decades ago to 36% now. In short, thousands of people are a lot poorer now than a few years ago.

This great gap creates two kinds of Canadians: the well-off and the poor. The gap is widening because of the government's destructive policies relating to infrastructure services for immigrants. They killed settlement services for immigrants, cancelled Ontario's Welcome Houses, the advisory council, reduced payments to English-language programs, new skills programs and, in fact, a host of other programs.

What's really interesting is that those immigrants with the highest education are the least employable and the poorest. Three weeks ago, we passed Dalton McGuinty's bill on greater access to trades and professions for new Canadians, but to no effect. We still have internationally trained professionals driving taxis and delivering pizzas.

This government's policies are obviously not working. We need a new approach. We need our immigrants working full-time. We need a new government. We need a new Premier whose name is Dalton McGuinty.

NORTH BAY HERITAGE FESTIVAL

Mr AL McDonald (Nipissing): It gives me pleasure today to rise before the House to invite everyone to the North Bay Heritage Festival and Grant Forest Products International Air Show, August 1 to 4.

This festival is important to the Nipissing region, not only because it promotes northern Ontario, but it also creates about a \$10-million economic impact on the entire region. This is one of northern Ontario's largest festivals, with a budget of over \$1.5 million, and it's very unique because it is volunteer-driven.

You will get four days of amazing open-air concerts and activities for the whole family, including the Village People, Wave, Leahy, Roch Voisine, Deana Carter, Jason McCoy, Shawn Desman and many more. We also have

the world strongman competition, one of the largest midways north of the CNE, Kid Kountry and the Inflatable Village, Parti Gras, cruises and the Grant Forest Products International Air Show, featuring the Canadian Snowbirds, the Skyhawks parachute team and the Canadian Harvard Aerobatics Team.

You will witness one of the largest, most breathtaking pyrotechnic displays ever to dazzle our region, by Nortek Fireworks.

I'd like to congratulate John Lechlitrer, the management committee and the over 800 volunteers who make this event possible. Admission for the entire weekend is \$20, and you can get more information on the festival at www.heritagefestival.ca, or call 1-800-465-1882.

WEST NILE VIRUS

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): Residents of St Elizabeth Village, a seniors' development on Hamilton Mountain, have recently come to me expressing their deeply rooted concerns over the emergency spraying of pesticides to combat West Nile. They fear that the spraying of the controversial pesticide will have an overwhelmingly negative impact on both their allergies and their overall state of health.

Their fears were magnified last week when it was confirmed that Hamilton has recorded its first West Nile death. The man was bitten in September 2002 and was hospitalized until his death in January this year. The man, in his 60s, was active and healthy before contracting West Nile.

I recently wrote to the medical officer of health for the city of Hamilton, asking if the city's public education plan could include a meeting with the residents of St Elizabeth Village to discuss the health risks associated with the spraying of the pesticide. It is especially important that people of this high-risk group be aware of the health risks that may ensue as a result of such spraying. The medical officer quickly responded by stating that while they are making efforts to educate the public, the city of Hamilton's budget for West Nile virus cannot support educational visits to individual institutions and facilities. In fact, the city's budget for West Nile is hardly enough to adequately control the virus.

The minister needs to increase the funding to municipalities and the board of health to ensure that they have the budgetary capacity not only to properly control the virus but also to educate the public, especially groups

that are considered high risk. We don't want a repeat of last year and we certainly don't want to repeat current SARS-related mistakes. The government has a duty to protect its citizens. It should do its duty.

CALEDON TEEN RANCH

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Riveting revelations about the high-spending ways of the federal Liberals' hand-picked privacy czar have had people rushing for their morning papers across this country. And when we thought we could no longer be shocked, the most shocking revelation of all: discovering that this guy, who is no stranger to Liberal largesse, because he was around when the Liberals formed the government here in Ontario back in the 1980s, once again at the trough—started small and went big. This Liberal enfant terrible finds himself with over half a million dollars in income taxes being wiped off the books the day before he was appointed to his plush \$200,000-plus job.

But we discover this week that Premier Eves, not to be out-Radwanskied, uses his little buddy Ted Arnott—talk about a Batman and Robin scheme—to try to slide a private bill through this Legislature that would relieve Mr Eves's constituent, one Caledon Teen Ranch, of over \$700,000 in property taxes. What's most interesting is that Robin, Mr Arnott, insists that Batman, Mr Eves, knew about it all along. But, holy Radwanski, Mr Eves insists he knew nothing of it. The problem is, they can't both be telling the truth. You can form the inevitable conclusion that one of them—I like Mr Arnott. I would never accuse him of lying.

1340

ARVATO SERVICES

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): The twin cities of Kitchener-Waterloo have experienced profound growth since our government was elected in 1995, and I am proud of what our residents have achieved. It also brings me great pleasure to announce here today that Arvato Services, a leading global provider of integrated and customized outsourcing services, has chosen Kitchener as the location for a new customer support services centre. According to Arvato president, Peter Schmitz, the community of Kitchener-Waterloo "exceeded all key location criteria, the most important of which is an excellent supply of customer support specialists for Arvato's demanding Fortune 500 clients."

Arvato expects to initially hire 150 employees from the Kitchener area. An additional 100 are expected to be hired in mid-July. This is great news for our community, and I expect that Arvato will flourish. This new investment in Kitchener's downtown area will complement the development and revitalization to which the city of Kitchener has been committed.

It is always exciting news to have a world-class company choose a city in Ontario as the location for a new office, and Kitchener is a suitable home for Arvato.

Kitchener not only has attractive credentials in information technology, but it is also a great place to call home. I want to take this opportunity to officially recognize Arvato for their commitment to Kitchener, and to welcome a world-class company to a world-class city.

SOUTH MUSKOKA MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Ms Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): I had the opportunity last week to visit the South Muskoka Memorial Hospital. This hospital has done a tremendous job in trying to serve the patient needs of that area. I was struck as I stood in the Frank Miller memorial wing, in speaking with the chair of the hospital board along with members of the administration, to find out that this is a hospital whose community has helped raise all the money required to purchase a CT scanner. Moreover, they have raised enough money to run the operating costs of that same machine for the first year.

This government has refused to give them permission to go forward and purchase the CT scanner. Lo and behold, the government, in its ideological bent, has given a private CT to a neighbouring town. What we know is that at this hospital they spend more money sending patients outside of the town for CT scans than it would cost to run the machine at that hospital in that same year. They send more than 1,400 patients a year. I ask the Minister of Health, why would he waste valuable health care dollars sending patients outside of the town rather than giving permission to a community that has already raised the money for the equipment?

This is a government bent solely on ideology. We need a government that makes sense. We need a Liberal government in Ontario.

TRILLIUM GRANT RECIPIENTS IN DURHAM

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's my pleasure to rise in the House to congratulate two community organizations in Durham riding on their successful Ontario Trillium Foundation grant applications.

The Bowmanville Horticultural Society has completed two beautification projects in Bowmanville. These include the planting of native species of trees and plants in parkland adjacent to our tourist information centre and planting at the western entrance to Bowmanville. A total of \$20,000 was invested in this project from Trillium, in partnership with the municipality of Clarington and TD Canada Trust's Friends of the Environment. I would like to congratulate president Diane Howarth and past presidents Johanna Bryant and Luba Samochin for seeing this project through to completion.

The Great Canadian Town Band Festival in Orono received \$60,000 over two years in support of the festival. I would like to commend David Climenhage, chairman of the committee, as well as board members Judy Climenhage, Sue Pott, Frank Corcoran, Martha

Rutherford Conrad, Colin Rowe, Bob Stogryn and the many other volunteers who worked so hard to develop this new attractive tourism opportunity in my riding of Durham.

These are just two of the grants from the foundation to organizations that make Durham a better place to live, to work, to raise your family and to enjoy your life. Recent announcements also included funding for the Scugog Shores Historical Museum and the Blackstock Skating Club.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not pay tribute to Alan Strike and Aubrey Oppers, two Durham region residents who serve as volunteer members of the foundation's grant review team. With their knowledge and community commitment, they have helped to make our community a better place to live and to raise your family.

WORKPLACE FATALITIES

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): On Friday, it was my privilege to attend the 19th annual Workers' Memorial Day in recognition of the tragedy on June 20, 1984, when a rockburst at Falconbridge claimed the lives of five workers. On display at that workers' memorial was the LifeQuilt. The LifeQuilt is a unique, permanent memorial dedicated to the many young men and women who have been killed or injured on the job. It is a tapestry paying tribute to those who are woven together in life by a common thread: a workplace injury. The focal image showcases a figure holding its hands up to the heavens, overlaid with thousands of organza ribbons imprinted with the name, age and type of injury suffered by the young workers. One hundred commemorative quilt blocks surround the focal image, each conveying the life story of the victim of a fatal workplace injury: those who lost their lives trying to earn a day's wage.

One thing links these names and stories: the fact that these tragedies did not have to happen. Injuries in the workplace are predictable and completely preventable. That is the extraordinary message behind the Canadian LifeQuilt. More difficult to measure is the untold pain and suffering felt by the families of young workers each time we lose a young worker to a workplace injury.

PARRY SOUND DRAGON BOAT FESTIVAL

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): In my riding, the town of Parry Sound was blessed with great weather this weekend for the second annual dragon boat festival.

Dragon boat racing is very impressive. To race one boat takes 22 participants. In Parry Sound they had 47 teams competing. That's over 1,000 people in a town of 6,000 people. The community spirit and commitment was amazing, as one out of every six local residents was racing, and a good portion of the rest were there to cheer them on. The dragon boat festival is organized by the

Parry Sound Rotary club and the West Parry Sound Hospital Foundation, with the generous support of the Royal Bank and other local businesses.

Without the hard work of local Rotary president Ralph Smith and the hospital foundation's director of community services, Dawn Cooper, as well as their many volunteers, this event could not have been such a great success. I was at the festival on Friday night and walked in their parade with my team from the hospital, the Rusty Trustees. The festival was opened with remarks from West Parry Sound Health Centre board chair Len Yauk and welcomes from Mayor Ted Knight and MP Andy Mitchell.

I joined Ray Pavlov, the local Trillium board representative, in recognizing the \$22,500 that the foundation had contributed to supporting the event. This year the hospital foundation raised \$36,000 in pledges to support local charities, plus the monies they raised over the weekend. Events like the dragon boat festival exhibit each of our great communities. They promote towns like Parry Sound as great places to live and visit. As the busy tourist season begins, I'm glad that our government, through the Trillium Foundation, has supported the Parry Sound dragon boat festival and many other similar events.

VISITORS

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Tyler Goettl, who is one of our wonderful pages from London-Fanshawe, would like to welcome his grandmother, Mary, his aunt Kristen, and her friend Tom. Please welcome them to the Legislature.

Hon Frank Klees (Minister of Transportation): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I want to take this opportunity to welcome constituents Mrs Rose Ladha from Oak Ridges and her children Shereen and Raheem Ladha. Please welcome them.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): We welcome our guests.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to have second and third readings of Bill 110, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000, which will make June 30 a statutory holiday in the year 2003.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

I'm afraid I heard some noes.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to ask for unanimous consent to have this day, the first day of a deadly smog season in Ontario, officially declared Smog Day Baird, in recognition of the Eves government's total inaction to reduce smog in this province.

What do you think, John?

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? No.

Hon Tina R. Molinari (Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like the House to recognize a constituent of mine, Paul Chrétien, from Thornhill, who is here visiting today in the members' gallery.

1350

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI

Mr Tascona moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 119, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to public holidays for certain workers / Projet de loi 119, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui a trait aux jours fériés pour certains travailleurs.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): The Employment Standards Act, 2000, is amended to guarantee that workers who have entered into agreements providing that they may elect to work or not when requested to do so are entitled to the benefits of the public holidays part of the act.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT

Mr O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 120, An Act to regulate the spreading and storage of sewage sludge and biosolids / Projet de loi 120, Loi réglementant l'épandage et le stockage des boues d'épuration et des matières sèches biologiques.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I'd first like to be on the record as thanking constituents in my riding for being good stewards of our environment, namely the Protect the Ridges organization, and others, I might say, who take an interest.

This bill amends the Environmental Protection Act to regulate the land application of biosolids such as paper sludge. I might make reference that this is the second time I've introduced this, with a couple of improvements which I might outline: a specific reference to paper sludge biosolids, and also to regulate the use of products derived from biosolids that would include Sound-Sorb and Nitro-Sorb. I would expect the House to be interested in passing this legislation.

MICHAEL MAXWELL ACT (HEALTH INSURANCE AMENDMENT), 2003

LOI MICHAEL MAXWELL DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ASSURANCE-SANTÉ

Ms Martel moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 121, An Act, in memory of Michael Maxwell, to amend the Health Insurance Act to provide for immunization against meningitis C / Projet de loi 121, Loi à la mémoire de Michael Maxwell modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-santé afin de prévoir une immunisation contre la méningite C.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): The purpose of the bill is to convince the Ontario government to adopt a province-wide immunization program against meningitis C. The National Advisory Committee on Immunization has accepted and endorsed a vaccine which is safe for use even with infants aged two months. Both Quebec and Alberta have begun province-wide programs to protect infants and adolescents because they recognize that meningitis C is a serious public health issue which must be addressed.

It's time for Ontario to follow this lead by adopting a province-wide meningitis immunization program so that the tragedy which affected the Maxwell family can never occur with another Ontario family.

VISITORS

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to introduce Ralph and Katie Porter, from my constituency, who are here today. They actually bid good money at a charity auction to come and spend a day with me. They're both very sensitive people. For what they paid the charity, they would appreciate it if there would be no heckling of me today.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): We appreciate that.

It's not a point of order, but while we're at it, we also have Robyn Perritt's family—Bob Evans, her grandfather, and Robert, her brother, all from Peterborough—here to see her. She's one of the pages. We welcome them as well.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a question for the Minister of the Environment, if he's in the precinct at this time. This is the acting Minister of the Environment, I guess.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): We'll look for some guidance. We'll stop the clock and set it back to the

beginning. If not, what we can do, as you probably know, is stand it down.

Interjection.

The Speaker: We'll stand the question down. That brings us, then, to the member for Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): My question is to the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services. When it comes to protecting children in this province, your record is abysmal. Children in provincial care are being put at risk because of your neglect. These are children who have no parents. It is your job to be their parent. It is your job to take care of them, to protect them, and you are failing.

Between 1978 and 1995, there was not one single questionable death of a child in a provincial facility. Since you took office, there have been seven questionable deaths of children in provincial care facilities.

There are over 280 recommendations from public inquests into the deaths of five of these children that you have not implemented. Minister, why, after seven children have died on your watch, do you continue to sit on your hands and do nothing? Why do you continue to fail the children you are supposed to be caring for?

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services): I can only say to the member opposite that I could not disagree more heartily with the comments she just made. This government is very concerned about the children we are tasked to care for. That is why in 1997 we changed the family act so that not only would we be able to protect, under law, the children who are abused in the province of Ontario but also those suspected of being neglected. That is why, in the province of Ontario, under Premier Eves, over \$1 billion is devoted to the programs of care for children who are brought into foster care through the children's aid society and other programs.

We take these issues very, very seriously. From time to time, we have had incidents where it was recognized that perhaps we might be able to do a better job. When that has occurred—most regrettably—we have listened closely and we have made tremendous changes, for instance, improving the training for those who are responsible for caring for children in group homes.

Mrs Dombrowsky: Minister, your response only demonstrates how truly out of touch you are with this file. As someone who is supposed to advocate for children, you are not doing your job. Here's what Ontario's child advocate, Judy Finlay, had to say in a recent article, called "Drawing a Line in the Sand," and I quote her: "There appears to have been a lowering of the bar in terms of standards and expectations of group home providers. In some circumstances, the living conditions of children in care are deplorable." She goes on to talk about the seven deaths in Ontario on your watch, and I

quote again from the same document: "All of these deaths were avoidable and unnecessary."

Minister, your own child advocate is saying you are failing these children. Why are you preventing her from doing her job? Why are you afraid to meet with her? You haven't met her. You haven't called her. You haven't even sent her a greeting card. Why are you muzzling her?

Hon Mrs Elliott: I want to be very clear. Neither I nor any member of this government has done a single thing in any way to impede the activities of the child advocate. We have never, ever heard from the child advocate to indicate that services or advice have been denied. We have never stopped the child advocate from going into any of our facilities. Not one change has been made on this side of the House to the powers or the mandate of the child advocate, nor have we made any limitations to her authority. We are very clear on this side: the child advocate's office is allowed to, and indeed should, investigate any circumstances that they feel should be investigated. They do not need to call the minister's office first. We would hope that she would do just that.

1400

Mrs Dombrowsky: Ms Finlay has been quite clear: you have lowered your standards. Children are dying under your care. That's your record. You can stand up here and recite all you want, but seven children have died. For 18 years there was not a single death; now there have been seven. Now the child advocate is raising questions.

Are you trying to muzzle her? Judy Finlay told the Globe and Mail that there is a dynamic tension between her office and you. Section 102(b) of the Child and Family Services Act directs the advocate to advise you, not your bureaucrats—and you haven't met with her. I have met with her.

While you try to shirk your responsibility to protect children, I take mine very seriously and will advocate for them. Ontario Liberals will not sit idly by while children in provincial care facilities continue to die. If you won't meet with the child advocate, if all you're going to do is prevent her from doing her job, then get out of the way and let someone who is capable do your job.

Hon Mrs Elliott: I think the member across the way perhaps does not understand the role of the child advocate. The role of the child advocate is to operate independently of the minister, to assist families for our children, or for whatever reason they somehow feel they need assistance that is not working through the ministry. It would be completely inappropriate for the child advocate to be under my thumb, so I think that it has been very right to let the child advocate be independent in the work that she does. Never have we changed the mandate, never have we indicated that there would be any limitations on the work she would do.

There have been a number of allegations made that are completely incorrect. I want that to be very clear. The member opposite has said that we somehow prevented the child advocate from getting posters. I've indicated that posters are available; they are reproduced and the

material is made available. In fact, it is now under Plexiglas in some facilities because the children would actually rip up the material and it couldn't be shared with other individuals. Those things have been addressed. We are taking every action we can on this side to make sure—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

AIR QUALITY

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a question for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, and the Minister of the Environment. As we enter the summer months, it is obvious that we're in exactly the same serious situation with smog that confronted Ontario all last summer. We know that almost the entire southern part, and even some of the northern part, of the province is affected by smog which is choking people with respiratory problems. What is worrisome is that the Eves government has placed the health and well-being of vulnerable Ontario residents at risk by withholding vital information about bad smog episodes.

Last week, in downtown Windsor, Windsor West, Tiverton, Sarnia and Mississauga, an ozone reading of 50 or over was recorded, indicating the need for vulnerable adults and children to take action to avoid being confronted with a respiratory crisis, yet no smog alert was issued to the news media in Ontario. Isn't it time that the Eves government began to protect the personal health of the people of Ontario, rather than the political health of your tired and cynical regime?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Minister of the Environment): I'd be happy to get further information for the honourable member. My understanding, that I learned from the smog summit last Friday, in reading reports from it, is that that period of smog in Windsor lasted for two hours. The standard in North America is to issue an alert after smog occurs for six hours or more. I think that's why it wasn't done. But in case I'm wrong, I'll be sure to get back to the honourable member if I need to correct any of that information.

Mr Bradley: Last Friday morning I attended the Toronto Smog Summit at Metro Hall and listened to a number of speakers, including Dr Ted Boadway of the Ontario Medical Association. It was an air quality conference that quite frankly I expected to see you, as Minister of the Environment of Ontario, attending, and not just for a cameo appearance.

Should I pause while you get prompting from the commissioner? The commissioner is trying to prompt you over there.

Dr Boadway provided clear and irrefutable evidence that smog has a serious impact on human health immediately upon coming into contact with our lungs. He has also informed us that 2,030 premature deaths occur in Ontario each year as a result of smog and that smog costs our economy over \$1 billion a year.

I'm having a hard time getting through to you because you're being prompted by Mr Gilchrist.

Why is it that when bad air has an immediate impact on human health—on children, on the elderly, on people with respiratory problems—that you will not issue a smog alert unless the Eves government predicts that it will experience six hours of bad air, when Dr Boadway said it has an immediate impact on their health?

Hon Mr Wilson: I'm not exactly personally sure how the six hours was arrived at, except that it's the same standard you had when you were Minister of the Environment. But you never made smog days public back then.

Mr Bradley: You're getting prompting from Gilchrist. He wants to answer the question, but he's not a minister, unfortunately.

It is obvious that the minister and his government's cozy relationship with Ontario Power Generation means that they are calling the tune on smog reduction requirements, and it is clear that no one but your government and OPG believes that they will meet any targets that have been set. It is equally clear that Ontario's lack of meaningful action will cause Canada to be in violation of the US-Canada air quality agreement.

Today I'm trying to get you to at least commit to alerting Ontario residents from Aberfoyle to Algonquin Park to damaging smog levels which will seriously impact on their health.

Minister, will you commit to the Legislature and the people of this province that you will abandon your politically convenient policy of refusing to alert the people of Ontario through the news media unless the bad smog is, in your estimation, going to last for six hours, contrary to the recommendation of Dr Ted Boadway?

Hon Mr Wilson: There's a word for this line of questioning by the honourable member. I would just ask him when he's going to apologize to the people of Ontario for never alerting them about smog days. This government is the first government to make it known, because even people like myself—I have bad sinuses, and no one likes smog.

This government has taken a number of actions, including that of OPG trying to curtail its use of its coal-fired plants during smog days, and that's why it's helpful that the alert is public. We ask others to try and curtail barbecuing, for example, and to curtail activities like cutting the lawn during smog alerts.

The government puts out these alerts to try and help clean the air. All of us have a part to do in that. Smog alerts aren't new in the world. They were practised elsewhere when that guy was Minister of the Environment, and he never made it public to the people of Ontario. This government has the guts to do so. We're happy to do so because we all need to work together to keep smog in check.

HYDRO GENERATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Energy. This week Ontario is bracing for a heat wave that could plunge us into brownouts and blackouts. More than two months ago I offered you a suggestion on how you could avoid this situation. It's called an aggressive conservation and energy efficiency strategy. California used it when their experiment with hydro deregulation blew up in their face. I showed you how you could save about 3,500 megawatts through efficiency and conservation, but you've put all of your eggs in one basket: your expensive emergency generators.

Minister, why have you completely ignored conservation and energy efficiency and put all of your faith in expensive emergency generators?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, Government House Leader): I take a great amount of interest in listening to the honourable member, who chastised members on this side of the House allegedly for pointing to California as the promised land to look at their experience with respect to energy policy. Now he, of course, is lauding California as an example for Ontario.

The leader of the third party did come up with a California energy model, of which energy analyst Tom Adams, who is a vocal spokesman for energy interests in Ontario, said, "Hampton's conservation claims are 'not credible.'"

1410

Mr Hampton: This is the same Tom Adams you used to cite when you said that hydro prices are going to go down and we've got lots of hydroelectricity. You just keep on citing him, Minister. He'll get you into more trouble.

We've had a chance to look at these emergency generators that you've lined up, these very expensive, private, for-profit emergency generators. We've discovered that TransAlta, Toromont and TransCanada Energy, the people you've given these \$100-million contracts to, are also very large contributors to the Conservative Party. In fact, the three of them have contributed \$120,000 to the Conservative Party.

It seems to the public that you're more interested in rewarding your corporate friends who give the Conservative Party lots of money; you're more interested in doing that than you are in protecting the electricity future of the people of Ontario. Minister, why have you done that? Why have you ignored conservation and energy efficiency and given these lucrative contracts to your corporate friends?

Hon Mr Baird: I take great offence at the comments of the leader of the third party. For him to suggest that there was any political interference with respect to a public request for proposals in these contracts is patently false. It is not true, and I would dare suggest that the member opposite has not a shred of evidence to back up that claim. If he wants to suggest that, I encourage him to

do it outside this place, if he has the courage of his convictions and the guts to say it outdoors. He is engaging in smear, gutter politics, which will not build his credibility.

Mr Hampton: We're seeing gunslinger John Baird. Well, Mr Baird, let's go outside. These companies gave the Conservative Party \$120,000. You gave them a \$100-million contract to provide so-called emergency generators.

But this gets worse. In your original request for proposals, you said they had to have the emergency power on-line by June 15. These corporate friends that you've given the emergency generation contracts to can't provide the electricity. They couldn't provide it on June 15; they can't provide it now. They won't be able to provide it, it looks like, until the end of July.

I repeat my question, Minister. Why are you spending \$100 million of the public's money to line the pockets of your corporate friends when they will not be able to provide emergency hydro generation on hot days like we're having this week and next week? Why are you putting the public of Ontario at risk of brownouts in order to line the pockets of your corporate friends?

Hon Mr Baird: The leader of the third party is engaging in gutter politics, and I think it's beneath even him.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My second question is for the Minister of Finance. We'll deal with the Minister of Energy later.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Outside.

Mr Hampton: Outside. I'll repeat the charge outside, and you can tell people why you gave your corporate friends such lucrative contracts when they can't provide the hydro.

Minister of Finance, we see daily instances now where the people of Ontario are becoming increasingly upset with your skyrocketing auto insurance scheme. But what is upsetting them even more is the discrimination which becomes evident: people are assigned auto insurance rates not on the basis of their driving record but on the basis of their gender, on the basis of their age, on the basis of where they live in the province and on the basis of a whole lot of other extraneous factors that have nothing to do with their driving record.

Let me give you an example. A 19-year-old driver in Toronto would pay \$2,553 for auto insurance on a 1996 Toyota. In Vancouver, he'd pay only \$1,298. Why? Because there he's judged on his driving record.

Why do you continue to insist on an auto insurance plan which results in this kind of unfairness and this kind of discrimination?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): We insist on an auto insurance system that is going to meet the needs of consumers. That's why we're making the changes that we are proposing to make.

Mr Hampton: You were forced to admit outside the Legislature last week that the scheme you have in mind, which will be to reduce or limit people's medical benefits when they're injured in a car accident, will not bring down auto insurance rates; it will simply moderate the increase.

The real problem in the auto insurance system is this: your friends in the auto insurance industry lost billions of dollars on the stock market. They gambled on the likes of Nortel and Enron, and when Nortel and Enron went down the sewer pipe, they lost billions of dollars. Now they want the consumers of Ontario to make up that money.

But equally, they continue to insist on an insurance system that is based upon discrimination. People are not classified on the basis of their driving record; they're classified on the basis of: what's your gender; are you single or are you married; where do you live; what's your age etc. None of those things are directly related to someone's driving record. In British Columbia, good drivers don't subsidize bad drivers. You're judged on your own individual driving record.

Why won't you bring in a public, not-for-profit auto insurance system, which doesn't involve the kind of discrimination we're seeing in Ontario?

Hon Mrs Ecker: First of all, other taxpayers subsidize those driving records. Secondly, there is a process in place to ensure that criteria do relate to driving experience, that they are accurate assessments of risk. If there are questions on that, we'd be very pleased to take a look at that, because that is an important issue that the honourable member raises. Thirdly, the reforms we are talking about are actually about improving benefits for consumers, not taking them away, as the honourable member insists on scaremongering. Finally, we are not bringing in public auto insurance because we think there was an expert who actually commented on this some years ago, former Premier Bob Rae, who said, "We will not be proceeding with it for two very simple reasons: it will cost too much money; it will cost too many jobs."

USER FEES

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): My question is for the Minister of Education and Deputy Premier. The funding formula your government introduced in 1998 provided no funds for community use of school spaces. Since then, fees for sports teams and clubs for children have skyrocketed. In Scarborough, the fee to play house league basketball jumped from \$4 a child to \$100. In Collingwood, the cost for trailblazer basketball jumped from \$25 to \$400 for each child.

But while community programs using school facilities are being strangled, you're trying to slip through a tax break for one private recreation institution. Why is the Premier pushing a \$700,000 tax write-off for a private recreation centre in his riding, while basketball groups, Boys and Girls Clubs, the Ontario Special Olympics and

other organizations are being shut out of public school spaces?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I would strongly recommend that the member opposite very carefully check the facts. I understand that the issue she's talking about refers to a private bill. As the member herself knows, private bills are brought forth at the volition and the expense of the proponents of the private bill. As you know, they usually approach your constituency office. However, if you're a member of cabinet, you cannot introduce those types of bills, so it's usually referred to another MPP.

What we're talking about here is a bill that the Premier was first personally informed about on June 9. At that time, he was made aware of the fact that Mr Arnott was going to introduce it. He didn't know the details of this bill, but as you know, the Premier has been very clear.

1420

I can also tell you that the Caledon town council unanimously passed a motion today that they will form a committee to work with the Caledon Teen Ranch in reviewing the arrears of taxes and the taxes on a go-forward basis. I understand the private bill is going to be withdrawn pending a made-in-Caledon solution, so I would not—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the Deputy Premier's time is up. Supplementary?

Ms Di Cocco: I guess the only reason that this bill is going to be withdrawn is because the Premier got caught. Mr Arnott introduced the bill at the request of the Premier's office, and he kept him informed—

The Speaker: Just to interrupt the member for a quick minute. Her first question was related to funding formulas and so on with the minister. It isn't appropriate to ask a question regarding private members' bills. You know it has to be within the minister's responsibility. That isn't within the responsibility. The last one, with a bit of a spin on it, dealt with the funding formula. I would ask the member to ask a question relating to the minister's portfolio, if she would, please.

Ms Di Cocco: I guess it's about a skewed sense of priorities. We have here an awful problem, a crisis across this province regarding school spaces and the inaccessibility of school spaces to groups, to thousands and thousands of children, youth and seniors who can't use school spaces because of the skyrocketing costs. I have a report that Boys and Girls Clubs now have to pay up to \$1,000 for two hours. It's just unfair.

We tried to get through a bill that was going to give \$700,000 in tax breaks and, at the same time, we have all of these groups across this province who can't access public spaces. They are being shut out. These are programs that help kids learn better; they keep them off the street; they are good for their physical activity and for their health. Yet you're shutting them out, while at the same time the priority is to give a possible \$700,000 tax break.

Hon Mrs Witmer: It concerns me that the member continues to make the allegation, which I've just pointed out to her was incorrect.

I would also remind the member opposite, if she were to go back at least to 1937, boards of education in this province have always been able to use their schools for other purposes and they have been able to collect fees for the use of those facilities. It's up to boards to decide whether or not they're going to allow this to happen. We would encourage them to make sure the charge is based on a fair recovery of the actual cost and that it also be sensitive to a group's ability to pay.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): My question is for the Minister of Finance. In order to encourage investment, economic growth and job creation, the government has announced 225 tax cuts since 1995. Can the minister tell the House what this government has done to ensure that its economic plan continues to support economic growth and prosperity?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): At a time when the Canadian economy and the Ontario economy are indeed facing challenges, I think it is more important than ever that we stick to an economic plan that has allowed us to pay down debt, balance budgets and help the private and public sectors create over a million new jobs. The tax cuts that we have put in place have provided over \$16 billion in tax relief.

We know that the Liberal Party is against tax relief. They have voted against every tax cut we have brought forward. We know that according to the taxpayers' federation, the agenda they have brought forward and the promises they are making are going to result in over a \$4-billion tax increase, something that at this time we certainly don't think is appropriate for more job growth, prosperity and future employment growth in this province.

Mr Miller: I certainly share your concerns that the Liberals, with their planned \$4.6-billion tax increase, would take us back to the days when high taxes stifled economic growth in this province.

Just last night I spoke with an Ontarian who had been working in the United States and just moved back to Oakville. I asked him how he felt about being back in Ontario and he said, "Taxes are too high." My friend commented that in Ontario it takes six weeks to earn what it took him four weeks in the United States.

Minister, can you expand on why we cannot afford to go back to the tax-and-spend Liberal days?

Hon Mrs Ecker: Quite simply, because it would destroy the record of growth, jobs and prosperity that we've seen in this province.

Interjections.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I hear the honourable members across the way from the Liberal Party laughing at what the taxpayers' federation said their promises will cost—over \$4 billion—in terms of tax increases. They like to

quote the federation to criticize us, but certainly not when he points out the problems they have.

Let's take a look—not at what they're promising—at their record. They voted against every tax cut we brought in; every single one. Secondly, they're promising to reverse tax relief. But thirdly, if any taxpayer had any doubt about where the Liberals are coming from, look at their record: they increased the sales tax from 7% to 8%; they did a \$2-billion employer health tax; they raised fuel taxes by \$1 billion; and then there was the commercial concentration tax. They believe in higher taxes—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The time is up.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): My question is to the Minister of Finance. Madam Minister, last week in this House I asked you a question, which was: why is it that 192 days after the passage of Bill 198, while Ontario's motorists are being given renewal notices with an average increase of 19.2%, we in this House, five days later, are not being provided with an opportunity to see the regulations that you have focus-grouped and round-tabled and sent out for consultation? For all we know, you've had seances to deal with the regulations that you've been talking about.

Ontario's motorists want to know: where are your regulations? Will you table them for all members today to get a glimpse at them so we can see exactly what reforms you're talking about and why it is you can't get them through your cabinet?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): The honourable member may recall in this House when he asked previously that I did offer to send him a copy of the regulations, which have been publicly available since February. If he hasn't availed himself of that opportunity, I'm very sorry. We'd be quite happy to send them across.

Again, when we brought forward legislation in this House to allow us to take steps to help consumers, you voted against it, sir.

Mr Smitherman: The minister has a very hard time remembering that we voted against her Bill 198 because it had a bunch of flaws in it, including the pension stuff that she had to retreat on fully. So don't be wagging your finger at me about the quality of the piece of legislation you brought forward to this House.

With respect to the regulations you offered to me, the February version isn't what we're interested in. What we're interested in is the version that you're working with now, the version that you're taking out to focus groups in places like London, Ontario. So instead of offering me some stale-dated version of your regulations that everybody has seen and commented on, I'm rather more interested in the current set of the regulations, the ones that you're keeping to yourself and that your cabinet colleagues so far haven't had the willingness to support.

Madam Minister, will you, today, in this House, table the regulations that are supposed to offer some relief to Ontario's driving motorists?

Hon Mrs Ecker: The honourable member just said that everyone has seen the regulations, so with all due respect, I'm not sure how come they haven't shared them with him, if everyone else has seen them. We'd be quite happy to send them over.

Secondly, it's interesting: we responded to the concerns of pensioners, we removed that section from the bill, and the Liberals still voted against legislation that promised to provide relief to consumers.

SENIORS' PROPERTY TAX CREDIT

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): Interestingly enough, my question is also to the Minister of Finance. In my riding of Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, I've received many calls from seniors, have spoken with many seniors, by and large living on fixed incomes, and they're asking how they can apply for their property tax rebate.

We certainly recognize their lifetime of contribution, not only to education funding but also to building Ontario into what it is today. Could you explain to me how the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act would benefit Ontario seniors, how it will support them to stay in their own homes and essentially what it will mean for their pocketbook?

1430

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): I'd like to thank the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant for that question. We do believe on this side of the House that seniors, many of whom live on fixed incomes, are having challenges in meeting rising costs—for example, property tax increases—and that's why we are proposing to provide additional tax relief focused directly on seniors. Under this program, eligible seniors who own or rent their home would be reimbursed for a portion of their property tax. It will work out to an average annual net saving of about \$475, and that will benefit over 945,000 seniors. We know the Liberals have promised to revoke this tax relief, to cancel this tax relief for seniors, but on this side of the House we believe that our seniors deserve that break.

Mr Barrett: I know there's been some concern about this, so I do wish to ask the minister if this new proposal for a seniors' tax cut based on the education portion of their property tax will in any way reduce the amount of funding that goes to public education in this province.

Hon Mrs Ecker: It's a good question. I know the opposition have tried to confuse our seniors about this. The amount of education funding is based on a very good, validated, student-focused funding formula—that's what drives the amount of money school boards get. For example, my public school board received over 30 million new dollars this year due to that particular formula. Education funding does not have any bearing on the amount of property tax that an individual is paying. So seniors can receive this tax relief, they can benefit from this tax relief and they can know that it has no

bearing at all on the amount of money their schools are getting in their community.

AIR QUALITY

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Today is the first day of what is sure to be a long and deadly smog season. The OMA estimates that over 2,000 people in Ontario will die from smog this year. About 400,000 children and 600,000 adults in Ontario suffer from asthma, and about 150 of these people will die this year because they cannot breathe.

Smog in Ontario is a disaster, and just like hurricanes and tornadoes, the NDP is declaring today Smog Day Baird in recognition of your government's total inaction to reduce smog. We're sending the Minister of Energy this certificate in recognition of your government's total inaction to reduce smog. Minister of the Environment, don't be jealous; your day is going to come.

I want to ask you, are you content to watch the death toll rise due to smog in Ontario or will you adopt the NDP's Public Power plan of closing the coal-fired plants by 2007 by implementing aggressive conservation and efficiency methods?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Minister of the Environment): Since the question primarily deals with energy and conservation, I'll refer it to the energy minister.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, Government House Leader): I'd like to thank the member for the certificate. She didn't in fact send the certificate that she promised to send over. Well, why don't you send it over? Send the one over. You didn't do it.

The Ernie Eves government takes the issue of smog and pollution reduction tremendously seriously. That's why we're one of the first governments in North America to make a commitment to phase out coal-fired plants; that's why we're accepting the recommendations of the all-party committee—where I believe you sat as a member—to adopt 2015 as the date to phase out coal. That's a date that you agreed to, I say to the former minister. We've made a commitment to close the Lakeview plant by 2005; we're spending a quarter of a billion dollars on pollution abatement measures at two of the larger facilities. We have a substantial agenda with respect to conservation and a substantial agenda with respect to alternative, new green energy. That will be good news for the people of the province of Ontario. You sat back and did nothing on coal-fired plants the full five years you were in government.

Ms Churley: That's simply not true, but I want to come back to the Minister of the Environment, because this specifically refers to something you said, Minister. On May 21, the Stayner Sun reported that you told a community meeting that the last of Ontario's coal-fired generators has received state-of-the-art scrubbers to minimize smog. Well, this is simply not the case. Only two of

four units at Lambton and only two of eight units at Nanticoke have any scrubbers.

I think the minister needs to come clean with the people of Ontario about that. Nanticoke is the single worst contributor to deadly smog in Ontario, but your government has done nothing to shut it down. The NDP's commitment is clear. We brought in an energy conservation and efficiency program that your government cancelled, and what you're doing now is hiding behind scrubbers that haven't even been installed and, when they are, won't even make a dent in the problem.

Will you correct the record today, Minister, tell the truth about that and admit that the only real action to reduce smog and save lives is to bring in tough conservation and efficiency measures so that these deadly coal plants can be shut down by 2007?

Hon Mr Baird: I agree that we've got to do more on conservation. The Minister of Finance, in her recent budget, announced that the government would be pursuing a strategy on conservation. We've already done a huge amount with respect to efficiencies. I know your leader held a press conference that said only 3,200 people had participated in our appliance rebate program. In fact, as of a month ago, it was more than 45,000 Ontarians getting involved actively in energy efficiency, and that's good news.

I say to the member opposite, when her party was in government they did a big study on vehicle emission tests and then shelved it and did nothing. It was the Ernie Eves government that took the action to bring in the Drive Clean program, headed up by my good friend Norm Sterling. It was the Ernie Eves government that has been a leader at bringing forward a plan which you agreed to on closing coal-fired generation. If she and her party were so concerned about coal, why did they do absolutely nothing? Five long years—not a single coal-fired plant was closed in Ontario. Zero.

Ernie Eves is providing environmental leadership, more so than any other jurisdiction in North America.

ASSISTIVE DEVICES PROGRAM

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): My question today is to the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services. Type 1 diabetes is a very challenging condition to manage. It requires constant monitoring and blood tests. It requires constant injection of insulin. It's particularly difficult for very young children to manage. Not to manage type 1 diabetes results in things such as heart attacks, kidney failure, loss of vision, amputations and death.

We have the technology to manage it. Insulin pumps have proven to be literally life-saving in Ontario. They cost over \$5,000 to purchase, although one heart attack costs \$100,000 to our health care system. Families have met with you. Premier Eves, when he was in Belleville last month, indicated that he would look into it and he had a concern about it.

Minister, you're responsible for the assistive devices program, which can provide 75% funding for these. I'm asking you now if you will approve funding under the assistive devices program for insulin pumps.

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services): Speaker, I will refer that question to the Minister of Health.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): To the honourable member, the assistive devices program is a Ministry of Health program, and I can tell you that it is a program that is funded 100% by provincial dollars. There's not a single dime, not a nickel, not a pfennig, nothing that comes in from the federal government. It is a program that is managed by 100% provincial dollars.

It has been a challenge in the past, I will say to the honourable member, when it comes to funding new devices that come through. We do have a procedure by which we do seek to consider new devices and their applicability. So I will certainly take the honourable member's points of view into consideration as we continue to improve this program.

Mr Parsons: This is not a new device. This has been around for some years, Minister, with due respect. In fact, insurance companies pay toward it. The problem is that we now have two-tier medicine in Ontario. For families that are not insured, they're literally going without this life-saving insulin pump. For young children, it is severely restricting their activities and in fact is restricting their health.

There is a private member's bill from the member for Windsor-St Clair before the House to recognize that this is proven technology, it is cost-saving technology and it truly affects the quality of life for thousands of individuals. You need only see a small child who is having to have eight or nine needles a day to realize there's got to be a better way.

1440

Minister, this is a proven technology. With the stroke of a pen or the calling of the private member's bill, this could be in place today. From a financial viewpoint, it offsets health care costs. From a humanitarian viewpoint, it prolongs life. I will ask you again, given your leader's support for this device when he was in Belleville, will you today approve, under the assistive devices program, funding for insulin pumps?

Hon Mr Clement: Again, I want to assure the honourable member, and through him this chamber, that indeed I'm aware of the issue. All of these new technological advances—even if they're a few years old, they're still relatively new—are worthy of consideration. The technological advances of the last few years certainly have improved the quality of life of a number of individuals, including those who rely upon insulin.

I would convey to the honourable member that he can be of assistance to us as we seek to have a new deal with the federal government so that they are paying more than 14 cents on the dollar when it comes to health care costs. If he could be of assistance to our side of the House

because we are battling on behalf of Ontario, that would be very much of assistance and would prove to be a tangible benefit to the people of Ontario so that we can in fact deliver the quality health care which he cares so passionately about.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): My question is for the Attorney General. A couple of weeks ago, I attended a luncheon in Kleinburg celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Women's Sexual Assault Helpline of York region. The Attorney General was also present at the luncheon, where he delivered a speech saluting the organization on their anniversary and for all the hard work they perform in assisting women in York region.

I was wondering if the Attorney General could inform my constituents about the commitment the Eves government provides to assisting women in York region, specifically the Women's Sexual Assault Helpline and the Outreach centre for York region.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I would be happy to answer the question of my colleague. I was happy to be there with her at this fundraising luncheon with a very important group in York region.

It's important for all Ontarians to know how committed our government is to reducing all forms of violence against women, and we are proud to take a zero tolerance stance on this issue.

Through my ministry's victims' services division, this government provides over \$350,000 in funding annually to the Women's Sexual Assault Helpline and Outreach centre for York region.

I am pleased to mention that the centre received two grants from the Trillium Foundation, totalling over \$415,000. One was to provide young women in the high school setting with counselling.

Again, my thanks to all those involved at the centre for all their hard work in combatting violence against women.

Mrs Munro: I am proud to be a member of a government that places the protection of women in such high priority. In fact, last year alone the Eves government invested \$160 million to help prevent and address violence against women and their children. No other government has committed so much in addressing such a serious problem.

This being said, I was wondering if the Attorney General could provide another example of how the Eves government is assisting women in my region and riding who are at risk of personal harm.

Hon Mr Sterling: Since we've been elected, this government has brought forth many initiatives and services to help those who have been sexually assaulted or are living under the threat of sexual assault. For example, our government launched SupportLink in 1998. In conjunction with its corporate partners Ericsson Canada and Rogers AT&T Wireless, SupportLink

provides personal safety planning and free mobile telephones pre-programmed to dial 911 to women at risk of personal harm. Last year, SupportLink assisted more than 750 women. The program has proven to be such a success that it is being expanded into five more communities, including York region.

This government is proud of its record in combatting violence against women in all communities across Ontario, including York region.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I have a question today for the Minister of Education. Last December, you had a report from Dr Rozanski about putting money back that you took out of education. At different times—on May 27, for example—you've said things like, "Dr Rozanski recommended \$1.8 billion. We're going to be investing \$2 billion." Some people believe you might be indulging in big-number gobbledegook, mixing apples and oranges, blending the funding for annual cost changes with the improvements that Dr Rozanski demanded. Can you be clear for the Ontario public and this House: have you already committed to implementing all the recommendations in the Rozanski report?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): First of all, to set the record straight, Dr Rozanski did not make recommendation that we replace the money. Dr Rozanski did a review of the funding formula, which we introduced in 1998. It was based on the fact that we introduced it in order to ensure that all students in Ontario would have access to fair, equitable funding that would allow stability in the classroom. I'm very pleased to say that Dr Rozanski, when he completed his review, did validate the funding formula and indicate that it was providing students across the province with fair and equitable funding.

Mr Kennedy: I can understand why you want to avoid the direct question. In estimates committee you said there might be some more announcements in the future, because you have not committed to even one third of the Rozanski report. There is no money, beyond some small dollars for textbooks, for the foundation grant, for more teachers, for smaller class sizes—the single-largest recommendation: \$477 million. There is no money for English-as-a-second-language classes to be improved. There isn't a single dime for crumbling schools. The fact is, your own independent investigator caught you taking money away from Ontario students and demanded you put it back. But you wouldn't do it. Isn't it true that the money you're talking about is simply the money that the Premier decided would be available for education even before the Rozanski report came out? What the people, the parents and the students of Ontario want to know is, why have you failed Rozanski? Why have you failed to get the dollars that students need back into our schools?

Hon Mrs Witmer: One more time we hear information which isn't accurate. I would just remind the

member opposite that within three days of Dr Rozanski's report, we announced \$610 million, which was invested. I'm also pleased to say that we have committed over \$1.8 billion in three years, while the Liberals are still only promising a less-than-adequate \$1.6 billion over four years.

TAXATION

Mr AL McDonald (Nipissing): My question is for the Minister of Finance. The Ontario government's policy of cutting taxes, balancing the budget and eliminating unnecessary regulations has inspired business and consumer confidence and turned Ontario's economy around. Will the minister tell the members of this House what this government is doing to ensure that individuals continue to benefit from ongoing tax cut measures, such as reducing the personal income tax?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): The tax relief program that this government has been following, with 225 individual tax decreases for individuals in our business community, has been responsible for the job growth we've seen: over a million new jobs. For example, this budget that we've introduced and are debating before the House this week confirms our commitment to completing the additional 20% reduction in personal income tax by January 1, 2004. I know the Liberals voted against that tax relief for individuals. As a matter of fact, their record was that they increased personal taxes three times when they were in government. Three tax increases over there, a 20% tax reduction over here—I think the voters and taxpayers in this province appreciate that contribution to economic growth.

1450

Mr McDonald: I've heard from many of my constituents, low- and middle-income earners, and their concerns. Could you please tell the House how low- and middle-income earners will benefit from the proposed tax relief measures?

Hon Mrs Ecker: Again, I think a very valid question from the member for Nipissing, who actually represents a community that has taken considerable steps to bring down the tax load on their community as well.

The tax relief that we have been providing individuals has benefited an average family of four with \$60,000 in income. That family is actually going to see, if this budget passes, over \$2,500 worth of tax relief. Again, I think it's important for the voters, the taxpayers who are watching, to know that the Liberals have voted against that.

Secondly, we have another 45,000 modest-income Ontarians who will be relieved of the obligation to pay any Ontario income tax. It's under the Ontario tax reduction program. There are now some 700,000 low-income Ontarians who do not have to pay Ontario income tax because of the decisions on this side of the House. The other side of the House does not agree with tax relief for low- and modest-income Ontarians.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Deputy Premier. This past weekend in northwestern Ontario, hundreds of residents of Kasa-bonika Lake First Nation were evacuated by air from their community because of forest fires raging out of control. Evacuation may protect the people, but it does nothing to protect their homes, their property, their school, their nursing station, the recreation centre. Nor does it do anything to protect their lands, which they rely upon in terms of trapping or hunting or fishing.

Why is evacuation happening? Because your government refused to implement the far north fire management strategy as requested by the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation First Nations.

Deputy Premier, can you tell the people who are now watching their homes at risk of burning up, their nursing station, their school at risk of burning up, the land that they depend upon at risk of being burned, why your government refuses to provide a level of forest fire protection to those First Nation communities that you're willing to provide elsewhere in Ontario?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): I'll refer that to the Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon Jerry J. Ouellette (Minister of Natural Resources): We take the forest fire situation very seriously in the province of Ontario. Yes, we evacuated the community. They're in the far north. As a matter of fact, it was the preliminary work that was done in there that ensured that the fire went around the community. We had sprinkler systems out. We were able to suppress any fires before they got to that area to make sure that when and if the fire did pass, it moved on through.

Currently, we have in the area of 55 active fires taking place in the province of Ontario. For those who didn't realize it, we've had rather severe weather fronts move through, where we've had over 12,000 lightning strikes this weekend alone that have been responsible for a large number of fires in the province of Ontario.

Also, we have a large number of fires currently burning. About 130,000 hectares are currently burning right now. We have all the individuals available for that fire suppression throughout Canada. I might add that currently there are no crews available in Canada, because we've gone all across Canada to get to those groups available.

Mr Hampton: Well, a torrent of information, but none of it answered the question. The question is this: these First Nation communities have approached your government over and over and over again. They've asked you to implement a far north fire management strategy, which would mean that these forest fires would be attacked much sooner, that there would be a greater level of protection for these people and for their community. Your government has refused to do that. You've refused to provide them with the same level of forest fire protection that you provide elsewhere in the province. Meanwhile, your government wants to open up their

territory for mining, for forestry extraction, for hydro-electric development.

It seems that you regard their land, their territory, as being valuable when it comes to extracting resources, but when it comes to providing them with a level of forest fire protection that is equal to that which other Ontarians receive, you refuse. Can you tell those people why, in your view, their resources are so valuable but their communities don't seem to be valuable to your government at all?

Hon Mr Ouellette: Currently, we have over 2,000 firefighters actively fighting fires in the province of Ontario. We take the far north strategy very seriously, to the point that a week ago Friday last, I was sitting down with the federal government and all the jurisdictions across Canada to discuss that very issue. We have tried to sit down with the plan. It's a \$1.1-billion plan that we're trying to work out with other provinces and the federal government to come on line to deal with this very serious issue. Quite frankly, it appears from the results of the meeting that we're getting some very positive responses on the five-point plan. It looks like we may have some aspects that will move fairly soon.

USER FEES

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): My question is for the Minister of Education. Parents across the city of Toronto are very upset because they feel that, through your supervisor, you're imposing double taxation on them when they try to use school grounds or school gyms for basketball or soccer, for instance.

We've got fees—for instance, the Swansea Soccer Club is now supposed to come up with \$12,000. I've got a group of underprivileged children playing basketball at Fairbank school. They're supposed to find \$10,000 to play basketball in the gym. The kids don't have the money. The parents tell me they've already paid their education taxes; the schools are paid for. For the last 50 years they had a reasonable little fee for using school gyms and for soccer fields. Now, with your government bragging about tax cuts, they've got to pay to use their own school gyms and their soccer fields. Even the Boys and Girls Clubs have to pay over \$1,000. How can you justify this double taxation on the use of school facilities by your appointed supervisor, Paul Christie? Stand up on your feet and defend Paul Christie's new tax on Toronto.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): The member opposite knows full well that since 1937, boards have always been able to make their space available to community groups. Since that time they've also been in a position where they're able to collect fees for the use of those facilities.

You know, unlike what is happening in some other communities, the city of Toronto can work with the Toronto school board, and I understand that they are now, to focus on how, together, they can improve community access to the schools and to the pools.

PETITIONS

COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS CENTRES

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition is to the Ontario Legislature. It states:

"Whereas the Manitoulin-Sudbury Community Care Access Centre will be cutting homemaking services to seniors and the disabled effective June 23, 2003"—sadly, that's today; and

"Whereas nursing services, personal support and homemaking services should be of equal importance;"—a point that the Associate Minister does not understand—"and

"Whereas most seniors and the disabled live on fixed incomes and cannot afford to purchase private homemaking services; and

"Whereas many seniors and disabled people will be forced to move into institutions once their homemaking services are cut off;

"Therefore, be it resolved that, we the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand that the Eves government increase the CCAC budget in order to allow them the necessary funds to enable them to continue to provide homemaking services to those who are eligible in Sudbury."

Of course I affix my signature to this petition and give it to Brittany to bring to the table.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): This petition is from Nicole Herbert, the chair of the Leslieville School Council, and parents within that school. It reads:

"As parents, educators and community members, we are strongly opposed to the continued diminishment of support for our children and their education. The 0.5 loss of our vice-principal is yet another in the already long list of cutbacks mandated by supervisor Paul Christie in order meet his \$60-million target. The impact on Leslieville and the students has already been significant. The new year saw a 0.5 loss of the secretarial staff. The 0.5 loss of the vice-principal will further erode and impact the overall safety of the school's unique and valuable learning programs currently available, the supports to children at risk and the valuable communication between home and school."

I will affix my name to this petition, because I support it.

SERVICE DE DIALYSE

M^{me} Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier): C'est une pétition pour le service quotidien d'hémodialyse à la maison pour Marie-Ève Chainey.

« À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Nous, les soussignés, demandons au gouvernement de l'Ontario d'agir sans délai dans le dossier de Marie-Ève Chainey qui requiert les services quotidiens d'hémodialyse à la maison. Marie-Ève était candidate pour recevoir ces services sous peu; cependant, mercredi dernier, faute de financement du gouvernement de l'Ontario, l'hôpital Riverside d'Ottawa lui refuse ce service. Nous demandons au gouvernement conservateur de Ernie Eves d'écouter ses concitoyens et d'agir rapidement. »

J'appose ma signature.

1500

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas some motorists are recklessly endangering the lives of children by not obeying the highway traffic law requiring them to stop for school buses with their warning lights activated;

"Whereas the current law has no teeth to protect the children who ride the school buses of Ontario and who are at risk and their safety is in jeopardy;

"Whereas the current school bus law is difficult to enforce, since not only is the licence plate number required but positive identification of the driver and vehicle as well, which makes it extremely difficult to obtain a conviction;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the measures contained in private member's Bill 112, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to protect children while on school buses, presented by Pat Hoy, MPP, Chatham-Kent-Essex, be immediately enacted."

The bill would impose "liability on the owner of a vehicle that fails to stop for a school bus that has its overhead red signal lights flashing...."

"And we ask for the support of all members of the Legislature."

This is signed by a number of residents from Innerkip, Woodstock and Drumbo, and I too have signed this petition.

VISITORS

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Minister of the Environment): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I know members would want to join with me in welcoming Greg Townsend, Doug Townsend and Ashley Townsend in the gallery today. They're the uncle and cousins of a very capable page, Ryan Baulke. A point of history here is that Ryan's father was also a page in the early 1970s.

STATUTORY HOLIDAY

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I have a petition that was collected this past weekend in Crescent Town in Beaches-East York. It reads as follows:

"Petition to Make Monday, June 30, 2003, a Holiday.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the former Conservative cabinet minister, Chris Stockwell, had a lovely European vacation at taxpayers' expense;

"And whereas the people of Ontario are working longer and harder to support themselves and their families;

"And whereas Ontario has fewer statutory holidays (eight) than the United States (10), England (13), France (13) and other jurisdictions;

"And whereas the people of Ontario deserve a real long weekend to celebrate Canada Day and to spend time with family and friends;

"I hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the bill proposed by the New Democratic Party to make June 30, 2003 a statutory holiday."

It is signed by just about 100 people. I am in agreement and will affix my signature thereto.

SENIORS' PROPERTY TAX CREDIT

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I was just speaking with the Minister of Finance and consulting with her. She is a very able person, and I seek her wisdom.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's senior citizens have devoted themselves to building Ontario's outstanding quality of life and have earned the right to a safe, secure retirement;

"And whereas the government of Ontario has introduced the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act, 2003;

"And whereas the act would ensure that every eligible senior homeowner or renter would receive property tax reimbursements on their principal residence starting July 1, 2003;

"And whereas this would provide an average annual net saving of \$475 for 945,000 senior households;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario enact the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act, 2003, to ensure" that all "Ontario's seniors benefit from lower taxes on their homes."

I'm pleased to present this on behalf of my constituents to Robyn, who is one of the legislative pages here.

HIGHWAY 69

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It deals with the multi-laning of Highway 69 between Sudbury and Parry Sound, a project that was promised by this government which they haven't lived up to.

"Whereas modern highways are economic lifelines for the north; and

"Whereas the stretch of Highway 69 from Sudbury south to Parry Sound is a treacherous road with a trail of death and destruction; and

"Whereas the carnage on Highway 69 has been staggering; and

"Whereas the Eves government has shown gross irresponsibility in not four-laning the stretch of Highway 69 between Sudbury and Parry Sound; and

"Whereas immediate action is needed to prevent more needless loss of life; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility of any government to provide safe roads for its citizens, and the Eves government has failed to do so;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to urge the Eves government to begin construction immediately and four-lane Highway 69 between Sudbury and Parry Sound so that the carnage on Death Road North will cease."

I affix my signature to this petition and give it to Nicolas to bring to the table.

HIGHWAY 518

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the ministry immediately proceed with the reconstruction of Highway 518 between Highway 69 and Highway 11.

"This highway is in a deplorable condition. Those who have to travel this corridor to their jobs, shopping, medical services etc have been promised by the MTO that this highway would be upgraded to allow for safe and problem-free travel.

"We request the ministry to commence reconstruction immediately."

I sign my name in support of this petition.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I have a petition that's signed by a number of residents from Clifford, Mount Forest, Arthur and Holstein.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas some motorists are recklessly endangering the lives of children by not obeying the highway traffic law requiring them to stop for school buses with their warning lights activated;

"Whereas the current law has no teeth to protect the children who ride the school buses of Ontario, and who are at risk and their safety is in jeopardy;

"Whereas the current school bus law is difficult to enforce, since not only is the licence plate number required but positive identification of the driver and vehicle as well, which makes it extremely difficult to obtain a conviction;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the measures contained in private member's Bill 112, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to protect children while on school buses, presented by Pat Hoy, MPP, Chatham-Kent-Essex, be immediately enacted. The bill would impose liability on the owner of a vehicle that fails to stop for a school bus that has its overhead red signal lights flashing and....

"We ask for the support of all members of the Legislature."

I have signed this petition.

OAK RIDGES MORaine

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It is my privilege to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Oak Ridges moraine is an ecological treasure that warrants protection and careful stewardship now and into future generations; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario has recognized the importance of the moraine with the passage of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001, to protect natural and water resources, preserve agricultural land and provide clarity on where development can and cannot occur; and

"Whereas the act has resulted in certain limitations on citizens' use of their own property within the moraine;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Parliament of Ontario take all necessary action to ensure there are no undue restrictions on Oak Ridges moraine residents making minor improvements to their homes and property; and

"That the province of Ontario work together with municipalities and landowners to ensure the interpretation and enforcement of the act continues to fully protect the moraine while also giving residents the right to fair and reasonable enjoyment of their property."

I'm pleased to present this to Caitlyn, who is one of the pages. And your riding is?

Interjection: Brant.

Mr O'Toole: That's a good riding. Who is the member there?

Interjection: Dave Levac.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you very much. I also sign this.

1510

COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS CENTRES

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition is to the Ontario Legislature, and it concerns the homemaking services cutbacks.

"Whereas the Manitoulin-Sudbury Community Care Access Centre will be cutting homemaking services to seniors and the disabled effective June 23, 2003"—that's today, Speaker.

"Whereas nursing services, personal support and homemaking services should be of equal importance"—and the associate minister does not seem to understand that.

"Whereas most seniors and the disabled lived on fixed incomes and cannot afford to purchase private home-making services;

"Whereas many seniors and disabled will be forced to move into institutions once their homemaking is cut off;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand that the Eves government increase the CCAC budget in order to allow them the necessary funds to enable them to continue to provide homemaking services to those who are eligible."

Again I give this petition to Brittany, after I sign it, to bring to the table.

SENIORS' PROPERTY TAX CREDIT

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's indeed my distinct pleasure again—and an infrequent occasion—to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario's senior citizens have devoted themselves to building Ontario's outstanding quality of life and have earned the right to a safe, secure retirement; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has introduced the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act, 2003; and

"Whereas the act would ensure that every eligible senior homeowner or renter would receive property tax reimbursements on their principal residence, starting July 1, 2003"—that's right away.

"Whereas this would provide an average annual net saving of \$475 for 945,000 senior households;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario enact the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act, 2003, to ensure Ontario's seniors benefit from lower taxes on their homes" immediately.

I'm pleased to present this to Tyler, from the riding of London-Fanshawe, Frank Mazzilli's riding, a great member. I'll sign and endorse this.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I have yet another petition, signed by a number of residents of Peterborough and Lakefield.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas some motorists are recklessly endangering the lives of children by not obeying the highway traffic law requiring them to stop for school buses with their warning lights activated;

"Whereas the current law has no teeth to protect the children who ride the school buses of Ontario, and who are at risk and their safety is in jeopardy;

"Whereas the current school bus law is difficult to enforce, since not only is the licence plate number required but positive identification of the driver and vehicle as well, which makes it extremely difficult to obtain a conviction;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the measures contained in private member's Bill 112, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to protect children while on school buses, presented by Pat Hoy, MPP, Chatham-Kent Essex, be immediately enacted....

"Bill 112 imposed liability on the owner of a vehicle that fails to stop for a school bus that has its overhead red signal lights flashing and....

"We ask for the support of all members of the Legislature."

I too have signed this petition.

SENIORS' PROPERTY TAX CREDIT

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): The petitions keep coming.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's senior citizens have devoted themselves to building Ontario's outstanding quality of life and have earned the right to a safe, secure retirement; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has introduced the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act, 2003; and

"Whereas the act would ensure that every eligible senior homeowner or renter would receive property tax reimbursements on their principal residence, starting July 1, 2003; and

"Whereas this would provide an average annual net saving of \$475 for 945,000 senior households" in Ontario—marvellous.

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario enact the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act, 2003, to ensure Ontario's seniors benefit from lower taxes on their homes."

I am pleased to present this to Bryant from the riding of Leeds-Grenville—Mr Runciman is the member there—and sign this on his behalf.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 23, An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 and the

Municipal Franchises Act in respect of consumer protection, the governance of the Ontario Energy Board and other matters, when Bill 23 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill, without further debate or amendment, at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may then be immediately called; and

That, when the order for third reading is called, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That no deferral of the second and third reading votes pursuant to standing order 28(h) shall be permitted; and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Minister?

Hon Mr Baird: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to rise in debate to the motion before us.

With the indulgence of the House, I did want to congratulate an outstanding citizen of Ontario. Madame Helen Vari, who has made an outstanding contribution to Ontario, was awarded an honorary doctorate of laws at York University last week. I regret that new cabinet responsibilities prevented me from attending her receiving this honorary degree.

Helen is involved in a lot of projects in Canada and internationally of cultural, social and humanitarian nature. She is the president of the George and Helen Vari Foundation, founded in 1984, to promote education and cultural exchanges between nations. She is the founding and honorary president of the World Monuments Fund France, a worldwide foundation for preserving cultural heritage.

The George and Helen Vari Foundation donated the central building of York University, called Vari Hall. They've also funded the Vari Laboratory at Princess Margaret Hospital in Toronto, among other projects. Most important, and in a very nice cultural gesture, in the year 2001 the foundation donated 3,000 Ontario maple trees to the Versailles castle and the city of Paris after the storms which took out a lot of very historic trees.

Helen was awarded the Ordre national de la Légion d'honneur de France in February 1993. She's a great ambassador of Canada and francophones in Ontario, where she takes a particular pleasure and interest in promoting the fact that in Ontario we have a dynamic and big francophone community, and it's not exclusively limited to the province of Quebec. She's a great ambassador for Canada and for Ontario in France.

It's certainly a privilege to know her and to call her a friend. So I wanted to recognize that accomplishment and achievement. I know all members of the House would want to join me in congratulating a great humanitarian like Madame Vari.

With respect to the motion before us concerning Bill 23, the Ontario Energy Board reform that was committed last fall, I think by and large this is not a terribly contro-

versial bill. It's significant, it's certainly not a housekeeping bill. It's not a terribly controversial bill, I would indicate to all members of the House, and I think by and large most members, if they looked at the content, would not take great exception to anything contained in the bill. They may suggest additional measures be put in the bill, such as making it retroactive, but by and large the content of the bill, I think, is good for consumers, good for the energy industry. It is a win-win scenario.

I did listen with great interest to the speech by the member for Renfrew North. He spoke very well, and he talked about the government's commitment to follow through with the legislation. Would we have the people and the finances to have a topnotch regulator in the province of Ontario? Of course, we have the person and the leadership of the Honourable Howard Wetston. His character is beyond question. He's a phenomenal individual. I think he represents one of the very best appointments we've seen in the province in the last 10 years. I was certainly very proud to nominate him and to have him confirmed by the committee, with the official opposition supporting him.

1520

Of course an important part of the legislation, to go to the point that the member for Renfrew North spoke of, is the ability of the Ontario Energy Board to be self-financing. There is, I suppose, some degree of a conflict of interest when we want a regulator to be independent, to operate at arm's length from the government. Today, the Ontario Energy Board's budget is actually parked with the Ministry of Energy. The general manager is in a situation where he has to get his resources approved, not just by the executive council but indeed by this House. In virtual unanimity we heard that there had to be regulatory independence, that the government of the day, for political reasons or partisan reasons, should not become involved in decisions of the board, and its becoming self-financing is a step to strengthen that independence, an independence which has universal support.

I should say, with respect to the speech by the member for Renfrew North, that I think he had the attention of all members of the House. I want to use this opportunity, in what could be the last week the House is sitting, to wish him well and to acknowledge the contribution he has made to Ontario. I don't agree with everything he says, but he certainly has the respect, I think, of all members of this place, and that should be acknowledged. I'd like to put that on the record. He is someone, as the critic for energy, who will likely know more about energy policy when I leave this post, even if I did serve in it for a full term. So that speaks to his experience.

To talk about the need for the time allocation motion before this place, I think there is a need for reform of the way we practise legislative affairs in this province. It is regrettable, I think, that even with a bill that is relatively uncontroversial like this, there can't be agreement. I certainly look forward to trying to reform the relationships that all three political parties—we will debate a terribly controversial, substantive bill for the same

amount of time as a relatively straightforward bill. I don't think that's in the best interests, and I don't think anyone can point fingers. I think there's probably responsibility on both sides of the aisle for that.

In listening to the debate, I'd encourage any member or member of the public to look at the debate we had on this bill. By and large, there wasn't a lot of debate. We had excellent debate, but not debate on Bill 23. We had discussions about energy policy. We had discussions about the issue of supply, which I think is a fair and legitimate issue and should be a fair and legitimate concern for residential customers and for enterprise in the province. We had debate on pricing. We had debate on privatization. We had debate on deregulation. We had debate on an open market. We had debate about a lot of things in energy, but we didn't have a huge amount of debate on Bill 23, yet today we're dealing with a motion to get on to the next important part of debate, which of course is to have a vote in principle on the bill. I think it's important that we do take a period of time to debate the bill, but an important part of the debate is actually to make a decision, to allow members on all sides of the House to express their support or their opposition to the bill by standing in their place and being counted.

I don't think there was a lot of debate about the bill, because I think, by and large, members on all sides of the House support it. I listened to the debate from members opposite with great interest, and I frankly don't know whether they're going to vote for the bill or not. I'm hoping they'll look at the content of the bill and see fit to support it. It's not a partisan bill. The bill is not in any way, shape or form linked to deregulation or to an open market in electricity. The Ontario Energy Board does deal with a lot of very important issues with respect to natural gas and the monopoly substituting for a market economy, which of course can't exist with the monopoly on the distribution side of natural gas. The board has an important function with respect to the transmission and distribution of electricity, to the generation and retailing of electricity. But the Ontario Energy Board of course doesn't deal with the issue of opening the market, because that of course is settled in this House, not by the regulator.

I feel very strongly about good adjudicative-regulatory instruments and bodies. I served as a member of the Agency Reform Commission for a year, where we looked at what we could do to reform adjudicative justice and approve it. I worked under the Bob Wood committee on agencies, boards and commissions, where we reviewed every agency board and commission. We were able to reduce them substantively to do a better job for the taxpayer. So this is something that I have a personal interest in as an important part of government. Too often we've seen that these agencies, boards and commissions, which were set up to provide a function outside of the courts, have not been as effective as they could be. I think Bill 23, before us, will help the board administer itself better.

I think folks at the board have done a very good job with the tools that they have had available. What this bill, Bill 23, seeks to do is to give them additional tools. In many respects, the board's mandate has grown quicker than it could have. I'm pleased that we will have some tools to give the folks at the board some help in doing a better job for consumers.

Bill 23 takes dead aim at a real concern that taxpayers have. It's with respect to retroactive prices. We have a regulatory regime in Ontario that allowed an 18-month retroactive charge to go forward. I think it's important that we put in place a regulatory regime that ensures that that doesn't happen. It deals with the retroactivity by ensuring that we have a regulatory calendar and performance measures and that there's a time frame. I say to the member for Windsor, it is a difficult task indeed to make anything retroactive. What we want is to ensure that we have a good regulatory regime in place that ensures that consumers are protected. The enhanced consumer protection in this bill and the tools that the board will have on the staffing side, on the financial side and on the power side to step in and protect the interests of consumers is good news for the people of Ontario. It's good news for enterprise in the province, those companies like the auto companies in Windsor that use a lot of electricity or the companies that use a substantial amount of natural gas. It is tremendously good.

Ms Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): It's privately generated, thanks to the NDP.

Hon Mr Baird: What is privately generated?

Ms Pupatello: Cogeneration.

Hon Mr Baird: Cogeneration? Yes. The member for Windsor talks about the major privatization and expansion in privatization. The second-biggest privatization that took place in the electricity sector was, as the member for Windsor said, the NUG contracts, the non-utility generator contracts, where the NDP said, "We don't want the government or Ontario Hydro to generate electricity any more. We want to get private sector companies to generate electricity for the government." They're call non-utility generators. That was done under the NDP.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): No, that's not the way it happened.

Hon Mr Baird: That is exactly how it happened, I say to the member for Timmins-James Bay. I guess they forgot about that because they were worrying about the auto insurance issue, making it public. Of course, they didn't do that either.

Did they privatize the coal plants? Did they get rid of the coal plants and shut them down? I said to the officials at the Ministry of Energy, "Get me a list of all the coal plants that were shut down by the NDP. I want a list of every single one of them." They couldn't get me a list. "Where's the list?" They said they didn't close down a single coal-fired unit in Ontario. Nothing.

Thank goodness, under the leadership of Premier Ernie Eves, we finally have a commitment to do that. We have a moratorium on new, coal-fired plants. They're not

allowed. Ernie Eves vetoed the sale of two private sector partners unless there was a commitment to close the coal-fired plants.

The Ernie Eves government, through the Ontario Power Generation, is ensuring a quarter-of-a-billion-dollar investment in pollution abatement at Nanticoke and Lambton, something that could have been done under the NDP, but they didn't do anything. They kept the coal-fired plants open. They had no plan to reduce pollution. It was go forward, full steam ahead.

We have a responsible plan, unlike the provincial Liberals, who won't release their plan on closing the coal-fired plants by 2007. I'd like the Liberals to tell us what the price of electricity would be in 2007 if they fired their coal-fired plants? We see the huge, looming, natural gas shortage coming from Alberta, and we'll see how they do it. If you'd like eight-cent power, 10-cent power, 15-cent power, vote for Dalton McGuinty. He's the one to do it.

1530

People wonder where Dalton McGuinty stands on these issues. He, of course, was a big proponent of an open market. The official spokesman for Dalton McGuinty said, "Ontario Liberals have always been consistent. We support an open marketplace." The Liberal Party said in a fundraising letter.

On November 11, I saw Dalton McGuinty in Ottawa at the airport. He was flying to Toronto where the government was making an announcement with respect to electricity policy. I said, "Dalton, would you look at the policy? It's a good one. I bet you might be able to support it." Dalton said, "No, John; unlikely." Of course then he came out against the November 11 announcement. Five days later, he actually said he was going to vote for it. He was against it, in favour of it, against it, then in favour of it, and then all the Liberals stood up in this House and voted for Bill 210.

The day Dalton McGuinty changed his mind for the third time, he sent out a fundraising letter to all energy companies saying, "Give me money. I want this money for energy policy too." He was consistent, and he supported an open market. The very same day that Dalton McGuinty put out that letter that he was trolling for energy bucks on Bay Street, he changed his mind again. I don't know whether he signed those letters in the morning asking for money from the oil companies and the energy companies and then changed his mind after lunch. I don't know whether he even caucused the issue. I did notice, when we voted on Bill 210, that the official spokesman for the Liberal Party on energy snuck out, because he didn't want to be there to vote against his own party. That was most interesting. The official spokesman of the Liberal Party didn't want to be there to back up his leader on energy policy.

Frankly, I am looking forward to seeing the plan. I thought Jim Bradley did a good job on the all-party committee on alternate fuels. Doug Galt was involved with that, as was—

Interjection: Chaired it.

Hon Mr Baird: —chaired it—as was Commissioner Gilchrist.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: It was Mr Baird that called Howard Hampton outside. Howard's been waiting for him for 45 minutes.

The Speaker: That's not a point of order. The minister may continue.

Hon Mr Baird: While Howard is playing political games, I'm in here doing my job as government House leader, as Minister of Energy. I look forward to talking to my friends outside.

I think it's important, though, that people should conduct themselves in an integral way and they shouldn't engage in sleazy name-calling and tactics when they have nothing to back it up. I found the conduct of the leader of the third party in the House this afternoon quite frankly disappointing. The comments he made and the inferences he suggested were frankly not fit for a member of this House, let alone a person who wants to become Premier. I know him to be an honourable man, and for him to suggest the things he did in the House reflect poorly on him and poorly on his party. I think those comments were regrettable.

I am looking forward to finishing the debate on this motion and on the bill because an important part of the debate is that we have an opportunity to vote, to take a stand. Peter Kormos—I know where he stands. I bet you I know where he stands on this bill, and he'll have an opportunity to stand and be counted.

I want to see where my friends in the official opposition will stand, because I think frankly Bill 23 is a good piece of legislation. I think Howard Wetston is a good man for the job of chair of the Ontario Energy Board. The changes that go on there will be good for administrative justice and for regulatory affairs in the energy field in the province of Ontario.

I ask all members of the House to support Bill 23, to look at the bill and at the debate on the bill in Hansard. I say to my friend from Windsor, what was the percentage of the time that people actually spoke to the bill? Very little, which suggests to me that there's not a great objection to it. There was a 100-day period where we had widespread consultations from the public, from stakeholders, from consumer groups. We reflected on what they said and responded. I haven't heard a substantial amount of criticism anywhere in the province about this legislation. Local distribution companies and most of the publicly owned companies in our communities support the legislation. Consumer groups have reacted positively to the legislation. Energy industry officials say it gives a greater arm's length and independence to the regulatory function of the Ontario Energy Board.

I ask all members of the House to join me in supporting this important piece of legislation to allow us to better protect consumers and to ensure that enterprise in the province has a fair and level playing field at the same time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr David Christopherson): The floor is open for further debate.

Ms Pupatello: I am pleased to speak to this bill. It is a time allocation motion.

When the government decides it wants to talk about energy, we realize it insists on tinkering around the edges of what the real problems are in energy today in Ontario. I listened to the minister very carefully talk about how people addressed all kinds of issues in the debate over Bill 23, specifically around this regulatory body, but he didn't really want us to talk about the real underlying issues around energy in Ontario.

I come from a very southwesterly part of the province. I come, fortunately, from a place that is very industrial. We have our history with energy in Windsor. Our industry in Windsor has led the charge in moving to low-cost, reliable energy, and in those years it dragged the Ontario government along and it worked with local utilities. I'm going back to the early 1990s, when expansions were afoot and they said, "We are prepared to pour money into our auto industry in the Windsor area, but we need to be guaranteed good-priced, good-quality energy and it has to be reliable." At that time, they worked with the NDP government and they said to them, "We are prepared to invest, we are prepared to join and partner with the private sector to produce this low-cost, reliable, good energy for our sector. Will you let us do this?" The NDP government came along and in fact opened these plants to allow our industry to flourish, and it does to this day.

Our Windsor Utilities Commission, under the direction of Kent Edwards at the time, was a leader in the utilities business, working with other sectors to make energy reliable and affordable for industry, which drives all of our communities. I spoke with Kent Edwards, going back, longing for those days again when we understood that those partners we had in this field had an ability to work with all levels of government to make it happen where it was required.

When I fast-forward to today and the last meeting I had with our local utilities—now, under new legislation, its own corporation, and the shareholders are all the residents of Windsor—I asked them what their issues of the day are. Well, the issues of the day are as long as my arm. We are now dealing with utilities across the province that are massively in debt thanks to the provincial government. We had a government that came along and said, "No, no, we know how to do this better. We are going to have the market bear the price of electricity, and they will tell us." Sure enough, like everyone could predict, because we had never addressed the issue of supply, the prices went through the roof, to the point that consumers could not stand it. That meant we heard from businesses and residents alike who could not afford their utility bills, because this government decided they were going to deregulate the market.

I remember at the time doing wide-ranging interviews, discussions and on-air talk shows on radio about what the real issues were with electricity. Most people, I suspect,

in the area of electricity need to know that when they get to the light switch and flick it on, the light comes on, and when they don't need it, they shut it off. I suspect they don't need to worry typically about when they're going to run their dryer, their washing machine, all of those appliances in the home, and worry that it's going to blow a fuse; that everything works. I suspect too that most of us have to get a lesson quickly, when you move into a new home, as to where all the switches are, just in case you blow a fuse, and that generally is the extent. We know we have to pay monthly bills, and we sure do worry when those bills are more than they're supposed to be or more than we predicted they could be.

It's one thing for residents to suddenly get slapped with more and higher bills and the bills keep going up monthly, unpredictably so; it's quite another situation to be in business and realize that your business is very much based on electricity and you can't control that your sales will increase in that same month to account for this massive increase in the cost to deliver that service. So we heard from businesses across the board. They could not afford these new electricity prices.

At that time we said, "Look, the market is deregulated. The government's deregulated the marketplace." But after eight years of being in government, we the consumers, we the businesses, we the other MPPs in the House would think that the government's done some kind of long-range plan to see that we are going to have the supply that Ontario requires to meet its needs.

1540

I marvel at the number of the times that ministers stand up in this House and want to go back to the NDP and blame them, and go back even further to blame the Liberals because somehow it was their fault, when this government's been around eight years. Eight years you've been at the helm, eight years you've been in charge to see that we have enough supply, that it might be at a price that we can afford and that someone actually could do some prediction over what would happen if you deregulated the market.

You went to the local utilities and you said that in order to prepare for deregulation you would have to do these number of things, which in the end cost millions of dollars for local utilities. It cost my own utilities in the Windsor area millions of dollars to prepare for deregulation. When the government changed its mind and re-regulated the market, our utilities were stuck with tremendous bills, tremendous deficits that they cannot recoup from their consumers. Consumers don't want to have to suddenly have to pay millions of dollars for things that don't directly benefit them.

So here they are today, hat in hand, saying, "How do we manage these millions of dollars?" at a time—in particular for communities like mine, communities like Hamilton, that have old centres, that perhaps have industries that have been around a long time—when taking care of the system is just as important to us.

I have a unique perspective, living across the river from Detroit and the power that's generated over there

through Detroit Edison. When they have a terrible storm or something that causes a blackout, when they have regular brownouts in Detroit, what we marvel at on the Windsor side of the river is just how long people go without power. Mostly because of the infrastructure in place and the maintenance that's never been kept up to the standard that it ought to be, they are scrambling in Detroit to get their system back up and running.

In Ontario we had some sense of that when we had the ice storm in the east of Ontario, when we saw what happens when you do without power for days upon days upon days. We're not used to that here; we're used to utilities being able to manage their infrastructure and keep it humming all the time.

I can tell you now what utilities are having to decide. Thanks to this government, that's been around for eight years, that has caused millions of dollars to utilities virtually across Ontario, they are now making decisions about the kind of infrastructure projects they can move forward with. We have transformers so old they should have been replaced long ago. They can't keep to their schedule of infrastructure maintenance that they should because they will not have the money to afford it. Nor will they be able to go to their consumer and say, "Let's tack on another \$100 this month because we have infrastructure we need to care for." We all collectively say that it's imperative that we can offer reliable, low-cost power to the consumer. Everyone agrees with that.

So then it comes to the how. How will we produce all this power? Often every party in here has gone to the California experience and either quoted it, lauded it, blasted it or something. But we have to remember that one significant reason that California got out of the mess that it was in when it too suffered massive supply issues. It went into red alert when it came to conservation. All of a sudden people in California saw that there are ways not to use power when we've been so used to using power. One of the reasons they could get out of the pickle they were in is that they dramatically dropped how much and when they used supply.

I believe a significant cornerstone, a foundation of any policy of any party in this place has to be centred around conservation. Who is talking about conservation here? Any of us who have been in the school system in the last three decades, say, would remember that they used to use icons in the classroom, little cartoon characters to make the point in the classroom about safety. We remember Elmer the Safety Elephant and how he would teach us as kids in the classroom about safety around a whole myriad of issues. What we need in our province is someone to teach us, in this new day and age when everything is electronic, how to use power efficiently, how we can go forward through our children in the school system and parents who run the household, how to use appliances efficiently and the kind we can buy.

Frankly, I don't believe—and I remember the commercials and the press conferences that Ernie Eves had over these matters—that just offering a tax incentive over the purchase of a certain type of refrigerator is going to

do it. I think it's going to take a much more massive public education approach to teach us how to conserve energy so that we don't need the volumes that we've been used to using. Frankly, you could call North Americans gluttonous over the level of power we have to use.

Having said that, we know supply is an issue. What, in eight years, has the government done to get the supply side moving? We know that the NDP cancelled the contracts it was about to enter into with Manitoba to have links to Manitoba power. Just recently—literally this week—Premier Eves is once again talking about re-establishing some connection with Manitoba and its power.

That's fine. But I have to say that the people of Ontario realize already that you've been at this for eight years. You can't just arrive at a point eight years into governing and say, "Oh my gosh, we've got a major supply issue here." We've been telling you. Organizations out there have been telling you that we have a supply issue. We have lots of issues around the environment that call for a particular way to deal with the supply issue; namely, I believe Ontarians want clean supply. That means we don't want coal-fired generator plants. We complain—and I heard the members across the way, even today, when we talked about the clean environment and someone yelled out, "Oh, 50% comes from the Ohio Valley." Why would that be? Because they're still using coal-fired plants in the United States. So any winds that are blowing our way are being blown right through those coal-fired plants, and yes, some of it comes to southwestern Ontario. That certainly doesn't allow us to put ourselves on a pedestal and say, "We are producing from clean fuel," because we're not. This government still hasn't found a way to look forward to shutting down those coal-fired plants and turning to other types of clean fuel and the kinds of incentives that will bring people into the field to deliver clean fuel.

Hydroelectricity is one of the cleaner fuels that's on the market. What are we doing? People like the member for St Catharines, people who are in the area of Niagara Falls, have long known that Beck 3 was out there and had potential for us. In eight years the Conservative government never turned to that source. Even though all of the reports and commissions—Macdonald and Burger King writing reports about energy—you never moved on the supply side. Now here we are in a crunch.

So the minister wants to talk today about how innocuous Bill 23 can be. Well, it's not. Bill 23 is supposedly about consumer protection. The number one reason that the chair of the Ontario Energy Board, a gentleman named Floyd Laughren, a finance minister in the NDP government, resigned was that he didn't have the ability to control the fact that there were going to be retroactive price increases sent on to consumers from Union Gas. So the response to that massive problem that frankly the Liberals brought up in this House repeatedly—and we had petitions from our constituents when they got those bills from Union Gas about fee increases

that went back the previous year or more. We said to the minister, "Surely, you're not going to allow these kinds of retroactive price increases." Their answer to all that, miraculously, is Bill 23. He says it's innocuous and non-controversial. The bill does nothing to address those retroactive price increases that were in fact delivered to the consumer. So the very thing that created—the bill in fact never solved the problem.

What strikes me as so interesting is that this is not the first time the government has completely bungled and put out of order the delivery of services of the Ontario government. You're a repeat offender. You are constantly doing things only to realize that you should have gone back and done something in a different order. As the health critic for the Liberal Party, I have followed continuously the health issues across Ontario, and the system is the same. You pushed Ontarians along in health service restructuring, only to discover well after the fact that there were things you should have done before you cut funding to hospitals. You had to bolster the community services, because people would be pushed out the door sooner.

1550

The worst offence for this government is that you were told, that you knew it would happen. I remember standing in this place and sending messages to my colleagues of all three parties to say, "Eleven days to go," and then, "Ten days to go," to the emergency room closing in my riding at the Windsor Western site. At that time I said, "When that emergency room closes, the remaining emergency rooms in my community will not be able to withstand the pressure of the closures. There's no room. There aren't enough beds. There aren't enough gurneys. There's not enough staff. There isn't enough room for the ambulance to pull up into the opening of that emergency room for the number of ambulances reduced to the sites they could now attend."

We said that in advance, but the government pushed along anyway. It shut down the emergency rooms, and there we were with ambulances literally parking at the top of the hill and rolling the patients down the hill on the gurney into the emergency rooms, where they waited in hallways because there was no room in the hospital for them.

There are so many instances where the government has completely bungled the order of things. I say to the public of Ontario, is this a government that deserves re-election? I marvel at the Premier of this particular government. It's not like he just got here the other day. He's been here since the 1980s. He was part of the Bill Davis government. Years ago he was the minister of social services, of all things, for a brief period of time in a previous Conservative government. It's not like he just showed up here. You'd think he would have had some history around this place to know that you've got to have a little bit of foresight about what's going to happen when you bring in legislation to do something. There are just innumerable examples.

When we talk about the utilities, the utilities said, "We're going to incur millions of dollars," and they did. You put the price caps on them because you knew the consumer could not sustain the new prices, yet you did nothing for the utilities to combat enormous debt that you put them in. You brought in legislation that forced them to become their own companies with their shareholders being their residences. You've left them in this mess. Now, how do we cope? How does Windsor deal with the enormous amount of money required for infrastructure for transmission? You give them absolutely no place to turn.

When we talk about health care and bungling, it's always the same pattern. This is the government that brought in community care access centres and legislation that was going to create them. Then you took their money away. Here we had a system where that's the group that's going to deal with home care, and you changed the policy for hospitals, threw people into the home care sector and didn't ever give them sufficient funding to deal with the enormous increase in volume. So today, also on the docket at some point we'll be discussing the budget and how this government is going to choose to take money and show how they're going to give seniors that rightful tax break that they're due. Have you said in the same breath that you've eliminated 115,000 seniors from receiving home care services? Did you forget to tell them that all the way along you forgot to mention that you increased their fees in long-term-care facilities? If it's not the senior actually in the bed, it's her family that's paying for it, and you chose to increase their fees by 15%. When we went around and said, "Hey, these people can't afford 15% increases," you decided to do a retread. You said, "Oh, well, we won't do this increase all at once. We're just going to slowly bring the increase in."

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Ms Pupatello: These people did not just fall off the turnip truck, with all due respect to the members here. These people see what's happening. You took money from the left pocket, and now you're going to tell them you're going to take part of it and put it back in their right pocket. They're still out the money. You are still making it difficult for seniors to live in this province.

These are the same seniors who got astronomical electricity bills. They are the ones who are in their homes still, lost their home care and are paying copays for drug fees. Of significant importance to seniors is how much they pay for drugs, because they are the largest group that uses drugs. Now you're telling them, "Oh, but we're going to fix everything, because with Bill 23 we're going to give you consumer protection."

Consumer protection for what? For the Union Gas bills that you still didn't help them with? We were giving them the 1-800 number to call when all of that was going on, and nobody answered the telephone. I don't see anything in Bill 23 that deals with the resources of the Ontario Energy Board to actually deal with an issue when it arrives at their doorstep. What are they going to get?

Sixty days for a response once the people know what the solution is? It doesn't even specify in the bill how long they're going to take to make a decision. For heaven's sake, it doesn't address real issues about consumer protection; it doesn't.

I remember when Ernie Eves was the Minister of Finance and we were debating a bill called the auto insurance stability act. Does anybody remember that bill? The Automobile Insurance Rate Stability Act is what it was called. I think that was in 1997. Fast forward to today in 2003, and look at what's happening to our auto insurance rates. The same government—you guys—brought in the bill, for all that your bills do to fix the issues. You never get down to fix what the problems really are in any of these industries.

But you would think electricity was one thing, I say to the silk suits who are supposed to help the ministers when they answer questions—but the silk suit staff, who typically make more money than the ministers they're supposed to serve, are not supplying the right information here.

When we ask, "How do we get energy and supply moving in Ontario?" I say to the people of Ontario, turn to the policies of the Ontario Liberal Party—turn. If it does not have a cornerstone that includes conservation of energy, it will not work. Tell us if you're going to turn to this significant industry in Ontario, that did rely on setting up partners for reliable, low-cost energy—what they think of your policies and if Bill 23 addresses any of those issues. It absolutely does not.

All I can say is that the government has zero credibility when it comes to consumer protection, when it comes to producing sufficient supply—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Ms Pupatello: As we hurtle toward a very hot summer—

The Acting Speaker: Member take her seat. I'm sorry. I didn't want to interrupt, but some members just seem to be determined to interrupt, and that includes a minister of the crown. And, if I may, the speaker's own party members are not being helpful either. So please afford the member the respect she deserves. Sorry for the interruption. Please continue.

Ms Pupatello: Thank you, Speaker. I am very pleased to allow some of my colleagues to speak to this matter. In summary, in the end, how will the government address significant supply issues for electricity? You've been here eight years, and we do not see a fulsome plan of eight years' worth, when we knew what the problems were. We knew what the Macdonald commission said, and that was years ago. If we think we have consumer protection for Ontarians because of this bill, once again you are laughing at the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: The floor is open for further debate.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Hang on. I hadn't recognized you yet. I just wanted to see—OK, fine; they're going to

pass around. Again, the floor is open, and I recognize the member for Durham.

Mr O'Toole: It's my pleasure to speak on the time allocation motion. The former Minister of Energy is here, and I know he knows the background of how we got to where we are and where we go forward. I think Bill 23 clearly outlines what is needed to induce a strong dose of consumer protection in this climate of dealing with the debacle, if you will, with the old Ontario Hydro. The Macdonald commission said it, as well as many studies and very high-level academics. I have to remind you that the author of the report, the Honourable Donald Macdonald, was the Liberal finance minister, so he was not a servant of the Conservative government. I don't lay the blame at his feet. I lay the blame on all three governments, all three parties. I would say that it has been clearly stated here.

I think the member from Windsor West made it clear that there was a role played by the Peterson government. During that time when Ontario Hydro was struggling, the debt did grow, and it grew to the point where in fact many would say the company was bankrupt. The debt load was some \$38 billion at the end. They did a debt-equity analysis, and they found out that clearly in that analysis there was more debt than equity and/or the ability to generate revenue to pay off the accumulated debt.

I wouldn't present myself as a financial expert or an economist by any stretch, but I am genuinely interested. I could say that when I was taking courses in economics at the University of Toronto, one of the professors was Professor David Drinkwater, who was the chief economist for Ontario Hydro at the time. They did a rather questionable job in terms of forecasting the demand needs. In fact, they had to scale back the Darlington project.

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In my riding, just outside the boundary, there's Wesleyville, which was, I think, a fossil plant that was to be completed. It was never completed. They built the rail siding, they built the 401 siding called Wesleyville and they built all the infrastructure. I think almost 2,000 acres are assembled—Mr Parsons would know the location well; he probably drives by it every Friday—and yet there it sits. It's a huge asset. I believe that it is part of the solution in the future. I think there are more generation requirements known.

I know that Steve Gilchrist, who was a member of the alternative energy committee, of which Mr Parsons was a member—they all realized that we have to find new, sustainable forms of energy.

Going back to the premise here, I think the Ontario Energy Board certainly is required, going into the future, to be stronger and to protect the marketplace to some extent in a product that at this time—and I say that with some caution, because at this time, there's no way of storing it. So if you have a ramped-up capacity to meet maximum demand levels, you're actually carrying a fair amount of capital cost to satisfy about a 5% need.

I'd be happier to see programs come forward which encourage things that Mr Gilchrist speaks to: conservation. In fact, I think that Mr Hampton, respectfully, is on some of the right pages here. Who's really lacking in policy, of course, are the Liberals once again. They're kind of sitting on that white picket fence.

Really, what we need are the right kinds of policies that encourage conservation. I think if you look at demand-side management, that is, giving consumers the right to—one of the things I liked was the time-of-rate metering. This is metering that would occur at the time of the day when you used the power. It would also relate to the rate at that time in the market. You see, I think the rate changes about every hour in the marketplace. So if I was using power at an off-peak time, say at 2 in the morning, the rate might be 2 cents or 3 cents. That's the time when appliances and computers in homes could automatically turn the clothes dryer on and off. It could turn the dishwasher on and off. It could turn compressors in the home on and off, whether it's for a freezer, a dehumidifier or whatever, so that the consumption would be at the time of lowest rate. Then the consumer would really have some power to make decisions and of course to buy energy-efficient appliances. In other words, the keynote for the future, looking forward, is not more generation, it's more conservation.

I think Mr Hampton is right sometimes: if you really want to discourage usage, you raise price. That will discourage usage. People will have to cut back.

We need to also develop policies—and I think this is going back to Bill 23's purpose here—to protect the consumer at the end of the day and to give them the tools and resources, and I consider in that the importance of industry.

I've heard members on the other side, specifically the NDP, talk, and I listen when they speak, because they're speaking with respect to their constituents, whether those constituents be the mining industry, which is a large consumer of energy, or the logging and timber industry, which is a large consumer of energy. They need to be heard, and they need to have a rate going forward. There's more to be said on what I'd call the rate mitigation agreements that are part of the legislation.

I have to commend Minister Wilson, because when he was there, he took the difficult steps of bringing forward what I thought were the right decisions to abandon the old Ontario Hydro. Some people viewing might take exception with that breaking with tradition. The truth is that the old Ontario Hydro, by every account I've read, starting with the Macdonald commission report—and there were PhD economist types writing it; they weren't some political bureaucrats. As I said before, they basically said that there was a problem. In fact, I think the rate when the market was scheduled to be opened—several times it was delayed—was about 4.3 cents a kilowatt. So we opened up the market or we froze the rate basically at where the market was or should have been. Some are saying the 4.3 cents a kilowatt is too low.

I would put it to you this way. One of the two committees I've sat on was the select committee on nuclear affairs, which looked at how much money could be spent to retune, retube and revitalize the nuclear industry. It was called NAOP, the nuclear asset optimization plan. Floyd Laughren, by the way, was on that committee, along with Sean Conway, a fellow who knows a great deal about the whole energy debate for the last two decades. We basically had a unanimous report, and I respect the members on there. I think Minister Wilson was the minister at that time. They really did make a very unanimous attempt to say, "How do we revitalize nuclear energy capacity?"

Nuclear is about 40% of the generating capacity of electricity in Ontario. How much nuclear is and isn't supported is a whole different debate. That debate was held in the 1980s, and it's the power source of choice, I guess: highly technical, highly capital-intensive and highly controversial to some extent. But I have to say that there's a plant, Darlington, in my riding, and that plant is a very good citizen in terms of working with the community. They are highly respected, and I think they are open and transparent to the public, more so than they ever were, and are now called OPG Darlington. They are trying hard to be a good, safe, reliable source of power for this province.

There's no source of power that doesn't create some adverse impact. We should all recognize that whether it's water power, which is known to create some environmental impacts, whether it's wind power, which has the visible blemish on the landscape and the danger to the bird population, or whether it's fossil fuels, natural gas or coal, all of them, including nuclear, have problems. We as consumers and as a society who are so dependent on large amounts of energy have to look to the future for more sustainable forms of energy that are more friendly to human health.

I would only say about Bill 23, as I said, that the Ontario Energy Board was established over 40 years ago. It has evolved and expanded and has served us well, but it has to change to adapt to the times. There is room for improvement at any time with any legislation, I believe.

Members on both sides of the House have heard the concerns of their constituents on energy matters, so again I urge all members to vote in favour of this time allocation motion to ensure that this bill to protect the interests of consumers is passed swiftly. At the end of the day, I understand that there will be some tone of disagreement, but I expect, for the reason that this is the last week of legislative proceedings, that we'd get on with the business. Certainly on this side of the House, our commitment to consumers is paramount. Consumer protection was key to the decision, action and overall strategy of our government in bringing forward an action plan to lower hydro bills.

I just want to stop and sort of break the tension, make sure some people are listening. It's a real privilege for me in my riding of Durham—we all experienced some wonderful weather this weekend. There hasn't been any

real drain on air conditioners and other heating-ventilation systems. It may be starting today, perhaps. But I was out and about to a number of events, and I just want to mention a few.

I was out to the Fabulous '50s event in Bowmanville. I'm surprised, Mr Speaker, you didn't take time out of your busy schedule in Hamilton to attend. It was sponsored by the BIA. I always have to respect Garth Gilpin and Ron Hooper, who are instrumental in putting this together on an annual basis.

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The second place I stopped off at was the Massey family farm show. The Massey family, as you probably know, or should know, originated really from the community of Newcastle in my riding of Durham. This show was made up primarily of farm implements and farm memorabilia. It was a very beautiful day at the Massey hall in Newcastle. Myno Van Dyke was one of the organizers who spent a lot of time, along with Francis Jose. I met a couple of interesting people there, I can tell you. Jack Gordon has the most phenomenal collection of Massey-Harris farm equipment and memorabilia that I've ever seen.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): In Brantford?

Mr O'Toole: Yes, unbelievable, David.

Anthony Turnbull is one of the donors, one of the local businesspeople who donated, and I was able to present a recognition gift to Jack Gordon. Again, it was just my honour to be there.

There was another really interesting event—at many of those events, I heard the electricity question. I heard other questions. That's part of all of our duties on the weekend. I had six events this weekend, all of them very enjoyable but we're always playing 20 questions. One of them at Hampton, which is a small community just north of Bowmanville, a little bit north of the 401, really close to the proposed technical route of the 407. They had an open house with local politicians. The mayor, John Mutton, was invited. I'm sure he's busy somewhere. Alex Shepherd, the MP, was invited. He was starting his holidays, I guess. I shouldn't say that because I was surprised they weren't there. Don MacArthur, a local councillor, was there. He's a good guy and a very strong advocate for community, along with George Krohn, Wilma Kantor, Vivian Barrett, Alice White, Celi Dickson and Grace Moores. All of these people, of course, are volunteers trying to build stronger communities. That's really what it's about—trying to build safe communities. I can say that Hampton is a community that's got lots of threats but it has a great core of people, all volunteers, that want to make their communities safer and a better place to live.

The last one I went to was more social and more enjoyable. It was with friends of mine from the Knights of Columbus council 6361. They had a barbecue where they invited other volunteers. It's my understanding that in the last 20 years or so, they've contributed over \$1 million through their local bingos and all that kind of stuff. I was quite impressed—all volunteers, all or very

worthwhile inter-denominational groups. I commend Joe Jeronimo and Richard Van Den Wildenberg. Richard was actually the former Grand Knight. Joe is the current Grand Knight, and Richard was recognized as the Knight of the Year. Al and Marilyn Arsenault are two people who make that whole organization go round. They work hard.

At each one of those, I'm out meeting people and I have assured them on energy—and the energy question does come up—that by passing Bill 23, the whole focus is to strengthen the aspects of consumer protection. I'm happy to support it myself, and I know that other members on this side are of the same opinion—at least I assume. I'm actually waiting for the member for Scarborough Centre to speak. She's eminently qualified to express the views of the urban landscape, for sure.

I would only say, though, that along with reliable energy the Consumer Protection Act also provides the Ontario Energy Board—and this is very important—with enhanced enforcement powers. There are also clauses in here dealing with the retroactivity which was mentioned by the member from Windsor on the opposition. That is important, that the retroactivity discussion will protect consumers again. The legislation that was in place, as I said, was 40 years old. It needed to be updated, and now is the time for the opposition to stand to voice their concerns but certainly to support this time allocation motion so that we can get on with protecting consumers in this province.

There's more to be said because the energy issue is a huge issue in my riding of Durham. It is my responsibility, working with and for both consumers and employees of Ontario Power Generation, who are great corporate citizens, as well as the Veridian Corp, a local distributor which is really wholly owned by the municipalities in place. It's got a great board: George Van Dyk and Pauline Storks are from my riding. They're good people. I know that they also want a fair and reasonably regulated marketplace. I believe this bill puts the Ontario Energy Board in the right position to do the right thing for the people of this province, and I'll certainly be strongly supporting it.

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): I'm very pleased to join this debate. I'm sure I reflect all the ridings when it is a major issue to constituents both in their personal lives or in their employers' lives, which has a very profound effect on them.

Once again, we have another time allocation motion. I really wish I'd been here at a time when we had democracy working in Ontario and bills were introduced and debated and committees reviewed them, and they went across Ontario and they listened to people and they brought them back and made changes. That must have been a delightful era. The shame is that it's not here right now. I believe this is the 123rd time-allocation bill since 1995, 1995 being the year that this government took office. It's a tragedy that people have really lost their input into it.

However, the government has identified an issue, and it's an issue that I think has been brought to light by media and by consumers. The question that was asked of me quite often over the last five or six months was, "The Ontario Energy Board exists to protect us from the industry, but what exists to protect us from the Ontario Energy Board?" The highlight of it was their approving a two-year retroactive payment—absolutely unbelievable to the average Ontario citizen that a company is able to get an increase dating back two years. There's no store that would say, "I guess we didn't charge you enough for the refrigerator. We're sending a bill for that fridge that you bought two years ago," but the Ontario Energy Board allowed the gas company to do that.

So now we've reworked the Ontario Energy Board and everything will be better. Certainly that's what they want us to believe. But again we see that in some sense the Ontario Energy Board will continue to be a device for the minister to use, because there's an advisory group that will give advice to the Ontario Energy Board and the advisory group is appointed by the minister. I doubt very much whether the minister—or any minister; this is not this minister personally—would appoint individuals to it who do not agree with his or her viewpoint.

So the Ontario Energy Board is going to protect us from energy gouging. It's difficult to envision things getting much worse than they are now. If we look at electricity, bills continue to be a major issue for homes. I know there was the announcement last fall in a house and the Premier indicated that electricity prices would be frozen at 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour—I wish. I wish they really were frozen at that. To the people of Ontario who are watching this, take your total energy consumption and divide that into your total bill. You're not paying 4.3 cents; you're paying 8, 9 or 10 cents a kilowatt hour because, although this government froze the actual energy costs at 4.3 cents, they also froze the delivery costs at the highest level in history, and we will not be experiencing cheap electricity. If you look at your bill, you can understand that we in Ontario are experiencing the illusion of cheap electricity, but in fact it's not.

We're extremely high-priced, and at the same time—and certainly in my role as critic for persons with disabilities I am contacted by citizens who through no fault of their own are recipients of the Ontario disability support program, which has been frozen since 1992. They are being asked to pay ever-escalating bills with not so much as a cost-of-living increase from 1992 until now. The absolute maximum a person on ODSP receives is just about \$11,000 a year. Try to find accommodation, buy food and clothing and then pay electricity bills. I have literally had calls from constituents saying, "Do I buy food or do I pay my electricity bill this month?" In spite of the rhetoric it continues to be very, very high.

That's only half the picture. For the electricity that goes to large industries—and when I talk about large industries I'm talking about industries that employ a lot of people—they are facing dire straits with these bills. They don't have that 4.3-cent cap. We have companies in

Ontario that have been in business here for 40 years and 50 years. Now they're being forced to put up a deposit in case they leave town, which is not going to happen.

In actual fact, I think Hydro One should be required to put up a deposit to guarantee the reliability of supply to these plants, because they're worried about brownouts. For many industrial processes brownouts aren't a matter of the lights going off. It's very expensive equipment and it's very expensive product that will be destroyed. The worry from large industry is twofold, but certainly reliability is a key factor in it. We've had a whole series of incidents across Ontario where insulators at Hydro One have been breaking, and Hydro One knows they're defective. Hydro One's response is, "We don't guarantee reliable supply and we're not responsible if one of our insulators breaks."

Industry needs to be worried that Hydro One will be able to deliver the power to them when they need it.

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In terms of rates, for a government that has preached rhetoric about jobs, jobs, jobs all the time, jobs are being put at risk in this province by the electricity costs that large users are being forced to pay. For them it presents the problem that it's a very competitive environment. An industry, whether it be located in Prince Edward-Hastings or a riding in Toronto, is not competing with industry in the next block or the next city or the next province; it is competing with industry in the rest of the world. Our electricity costs have increased to the point where the plant managers are saying to me, "We are concerned that we're no longer competitive with plants in the United States." We're not talking a Third World country; we're talking plants in the United States. They say, "Their costs are now lower than ours, and every two years, every three years, we have to put in a bid against the other plants to ensure that we are the low-cost bidder. We think we've lost our competitive edge because of these electricity costs." Maybe the Ontario Energy Board is going to act, but it's like shutting the barn door after the horse has got away. It's an absolute fiasco.

There was a comment made earlier by a government member that a good way to discourage usage was to raise the price. Well, it's working. We are going to have less usage, not because of conservation but because of plants having to shut down, unable to be competitive because of the hydro price.

We were the jewel of the world. Sir Adam Beck was a hero who brought in the concept of public electricity at cost. In fact, I believe it was a Conservative government that touted that concept of electricity at cost. How they have turned and destroyed the concept, and now there is no number of middle organizations in place to grab it up.

All of this was done in the name of lowering the debt, but have we in fact lowered the debt, or are we increasing it? The reality is, for all of these people in Ontario—I'm included, and everyone here—who write a cheque each month for their electricity, there's a debt retirement charge in it. There is also GST on it because this government hasn't got the courage to say, "This is actually a

tax. It is a new tax on Ontario's levy." If they admitted it was a tax, there wouldn't be GST on it. But they just can't say the words, "We've implemented a new tax."

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Minister of the Environment): It's not a tax.

Mr Parsons: It's a tax. When you pay your money to pay down a debt that the government has incurred, that's a tax.

Hon Mr Wilson: It's not new.

Mr Parsons: Call it what you want, it's a tax. The people in Ontario know it's a tax and that we're paying more money for GST than we need to because you can't say, "It's a tax." But it is a tax.

The total bill for the debt continues to increase because we're buying electricity at more than we're selling it for—simple as that. So for all the pain that every individual citizen in Ontario is experiencing, it's getting worse instead of better.

The explanation was also given to us that we need to break it up because Ontario Hydro is bankrupt. They don't have the money and they can't borrow the money to build a new plant. They can no longer borrow the money. Well, interestingly, Hydro One went to the market and said, "We want \$500 million to buy all the local utilities." They got their money just like that because the financial world said, "Hydro One is in good shape. They owe money but they also have tremendously valuable assets." Hydro One had no difficulty at all raising \$500 million to buy up local utilities.

Did it improve service? Let me tell you on behalf of the citizens of Ontario, we're not sure there is anyone at the other end when you phone Hydro One for a complaint. Interestingly, I had contact from an individual who said his father is getting up in years, is going to move and had tried to contact Hydro One. His father, being retired, had the opportunity to phone about every hour. He called Hydro One every day for a week and a half and all he got was a message that his call was important and "Please wait." It went on and on and on, so finally in frustration he said, "Can you do something?"

We called Hydro One and said, "We have a constituent who is unable to reach you," and the response was, "Tell him to call us." Well, that poor gentleman had been trying for eight days straight, not counting weekends, to get through to Hydro One.

I just found out that at Hydro One, in order to improve the service to the public, they actually hired back 20 laid-off customer service people. What in the world prompted them to lay them off? Every time Hydro One says they're going to give me better service, I know I'm going to get less. They hired back 20 individuals to respond to the phones. These people were already trained because they worked there. Interestingly, with the 20 new individuals there now to respond to the 1-800 phone calls, productivity within the customer service area has gone up zero. There are still the same number of hang-ups, still the same number of people not able to get through. That isn't a reflection on the 20 people they brought back. That

means the volume of people trying to get through to them is so huge that 20 more people aren't going to do it.

This government's mad craze to consolidate everything in one place and to have one call centre do it—the people of Ontario reminisce with me how nice it was when there were local hydro offices that knew the territory, knew the community. You could either drop in and pay your bill or you could phone them. Customer service is absolutely zilch with Hydro One. I give credit totally to this government with the restructuring: Hydro One's problem, Ontario Hydro's problem, was the debt. You've taken and destroyed a system that worked and you've managed to increase the debt at the same time. That's quite an accomplishment for you.

We should be concerned about conservation, and that really doesn't exist.

I'm trying to recall. In the terms that we're setting up for this new Ontario Energy Board, they list the objectives for this new board. It says, "to protect the interests of consumers." That's number 3. The Ontario Energy Board is being touted as being there to protect consumers, and you're setting the priority of protecting interests of consumers as number 3. Number 1 is "to facilitate competition in the generation and sale of electricity and facilitate a smooth transition to competition." Your mantra of privatize, privatize, privatize still continues to be the number one objective in all your dealings with Hydro One, and customer service is number 3. I guess we should be grateful it's at least on the list, but it is not a priority.

Your number one objective as a government is to serve the interests of people. Forget your rich friends, forget Bay Street and forget the market you want to play to, and think about the average Ontario citizen just this once, because this is too important to play your little games of trying to privatize and see if it works or not.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I was sitting here this afternoon contemplating another closure debate. I've been here now for 20 months and I don't think there has been a single bill, maybe with one or two exceptions, that has not ended up with a closure debate.

I started to think about my political life over these last 15 years and how often I have seen this type of closure. Certainly it was unheard of in the times of the borough of East York council, where everything was debated. Even though it might have seemed long and tedious, we listened to what all people had to say.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture): The sex offender registry and the Sergeant Rick McDonald bills.

Mr Prue: We got two. OK. I've been reminded there have been two in the last 20 months. I thank the honourable minister.

I was thinking back to the times when we actually listened to what our constituents had to say, when we invited people at each and every meeting to come forward and have an interface with their politicians, to talk to them about the issues of the day. Then we had a very lively debate among our council colleagues and we came

to conclusions sometimes late into the evening, but we heard every single thing and looked at every single possible avenue.

Then I looked at what happened in the city of Toronto after amalgamation. I looked at that too, and that was sort of somewhere in between what I found here. Closure would often be used, but certainly not to the extent it would be used here. It would be used on one or two debates—

Interjection.

Mr Prue: It would be used on one or two debates on every council meeting, one or two items that would come up that would take a long time; there would be closure called by someone and it would occasionally pass. But the overwhelming number of items that were before and are there every single week would be the subject of a full debate, although unfortunately they would not take the time too often to listen to what their constituents had to say, or in committee or anywhere else. Then you come here and you see that closure is the norm. Closure is not something that is used on a rare occasion because the debate has taken too long or it's too late into the process; it is used on every single—every single—bill.

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I have to tell you that for a democrat—not a New Democrat, but a democrat, someone who believes that the public needs to be heard, someone who believes that all aspects of every piece of legislation have to be explored to make sure that the bill is whole and complete and proper—the use of closure can never be said to be a good thing. Here I am standing up again with another closure debate and another bill.

There are some who will think that this bill is a good thing, like my friend from Scarborough Centre, who natters on and natters on. I try not to listen to her, because usually what she's saying makes very little sense. I'm sure that others would share that comment.

We have another bill here, which I'm sure some people on the opposite side think may have some relevance and that it may be a good thing. But I would suggest to you that this is another bill that is trying to fix something which is badly broken and it's not going to fix it. The problem here is not that the OEB needs a new Consumer Protection and Governance Act; the problem here is that the entire deregulation of hydro has been a disaster—the deregulation has simply not worked, and this is but another bill trying to staunch up and stop that which has gone so terribly wrong.

When I first came here, I remember one of the first weeks—it was the time when Mr Harris, as the Premier, was about to resign. He stood over there in his seat and he announced the privatization of hydroelectricity. I had seen a great many things in this province over the last several years with him as the Premier. I saw people being attacked: the poor, the welfare recipients. I saw people being attacked because they were in unions, because they did not agree, because they were special interests—whatever special interests—because they were teachers, because they were doctors, because they were nurses,

because they had the temerity and the unmitigated gall to disagree with this government. They were attacked and attacked and attacked. I want to say that I believe the greatest attack that ever took place by Mr Harris probably took place on that day. Because what he did was he turned around and attacked his own party. He hoist them, literally, on their own petard; with their own mantra of privatization he gave them this whole hydro fiasco.

They've been trying to recover, quite literally, from that statement he made in this Legislature on that day, throughout the last two years. I don't believe that they have succeeded. Because they have gone from crisis to crisis: they have gone from deregulation to partial deregulation; they have gone from soaring prices to even more soaring prices; they have gone to layoffs; they have gone to towns like Wawa in terrible economic straits; they have gone to lakes and our environment, where Brascan takes the opportunity to empty an entire lake in order to make money. We have seen all of that in the last 18 months.

I want to talk about a bit of a hydro rip-off that happened to me but on Friday. It happened to me. I got home and got my hydro bill. We all get hydro bills and we all think they're way too high. I looked down at my hydro bill and I saw that it was three times as much as I had ever, ever paid before. This was at a time when until today, we didn't even have any real reason to use a lot of hydro over the spring. I looked down at that bill and it wasn't for any hydro that I was using these days, it was for hydro that I purportedly used last August. I wondered, "Why am I getting a bill from last August?" I went back and I looked at all of the bills—because my wife has a very good filing system. I looked: \$200; \$220; \$210; \$190—through every couple of months when we got the hydro bill, they were always the same. It was true from last August too: it was a couple of hundred dollars and I never really thought too much. Because it's very difficult to read the hydro bills, even for someone who deals with it every day like I do in this Legislature; even for somebody who knows that the hydro bill contains a lot more than the electricity you actually use.

So it was a bit of an education for me over the weekend to go down in my hydro bill and just look at how much we spend and how much the consumers are asked to spend for the delivery of electricity. I got my bills out and I looked down them, and there are really six charges. The first charge is the customer charge. You are charged simply for being a customer. That charge can be quite significant. I look down on the bill—here's this month's bill—and for being a customer, I am charged \$28.06. I'm sure if I'm charged \$28.06, there are those who are charged both more and less than what I am charged. But just for being a customer I'm charged \$28.06.

For distribution—the fact that they have to take the electricity from the grid and distribute it to my house—I am charged \$28.65.

Then there's the transmission charge. I guess that's because it has to go on a wire somewhere. I am charged

\$23.07 for the fact that they transmit the electricity from Niagara Falls or Pickering—no, they don't do it from there, because that doesn't work—or from wherever, maybe the windmill on the waterfront. They transmit it to my house, and that's \$23.07.

Then I looked at the wholesale operations charge. I don't really know what that is, but that's \$13.75.

Fifth is the debt retirement charge. Now, this is the only one I understand, and I think all Ontarians understand it and recognize that the Hydro debt has to be paid down and it has to come from somewhere. At least I acknowledge that that debt belongs to me as a member of the community, as someone who uses hydroelectricity, and that I have a responsibility to pay down that debt in due course.

Then comes the actual energy. The first bill was for \$108.50, for those five items. Then the actual energy I used is \$95.39. So it works out that 55% of my bill has nothing to do with the electricity I used; it has to do with customer charges, distribution charges, transmission charges, wholesale operation charges and debt retirement charges. And how much I used came to \$95.

But then the smacker and the beauty was, there's a new thing here that they call the final government true-up to 4.3 cents, and this month my bill was \$379.68 for a final true-up to 4.3 cents. Well, of course I was quite incensed. What is a final true-up to 4.3 cents? I had no idea what this meant. Then, on Friday afternoon, from my constituency office, I started to make a few phone calls. I was kind of naive as to what this was, but my constituency people were not, because they have had dozens of similar bills come into our office in Beaches-East York in the last few weeks. As people are getting their hydro bills, they're looking down and seeing bills for \$200, \$300, \$400 for true-up charges going back to the year 2002.

I started to make some phone calls to find out what these were all about. I have to tell you I was a little hot under the collar. I phoned Ontario Hydro. I phoned Toronto Hydro. I phoned just everyone, trying to figure out what this was, until I finally got an individual who was able to tell me that this was because last August the electricity company forgot to add some monies to the charge. They told me last August was one of the key times when they forgot to put that actual money down and that last August I had used some \$200 worth of electricity that they had forgotten to tell anyone about and had forgotten to tell me about.

So I went back to my bill from last August and looked down all of these customer charges, and I found an August bill of \$211.96, which I thought was a pretty normal hydro bill for me until I realized—and you look at the bill, in the fine print, and you see that there is no energy charge. Somebody forgot to charge me for the energy last August, and they're getting around to it now. This is just one of the two bills—last August and last October of 2002—and they're getting around to it now. So now I have been trued up. I have been trued up by the

great energy system that this government has created. I have been trued up and told to pay this extra \$379.68.

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I would acknowledge that maybe I should be paying this. But I will tell you that no other company that I have ever dealt with, that I can remember in my life, has sent me a bill 10 months after the fact because of errors and their own sloppiness in making it. No other company has taken me hours and hours and hours of phoning, trying to get an explanation, as they did. They seem to think it's quite normal and natural.

I would suggest it is just another example of the frustration of the people who are out there. If I was frustrated and understand the system at least a little, you can think about the pensioners, you can think about the people with limited education, you can think about the people who do not understand the hydro system, what they must think, what they must feel and how they cannot possibly be expected to understand a new bill of \$379 plumped on them just like that for no reason at all. I would suggest that this whole experiment has gone badly, badly askew. Not only do they send out bills like this, but everything else in the electrical system has gone wrong.

We have a bill here called the Ontario Energy Board Consumer Protection and Governance Act, which is supposed to, I guess, somehow fix a little bit of this. I don't know what needs fixing. I doubt very much what's in this bill is going to fix anything. In reality, the system is terribly broken. What it needs is not a little bit of tinkering, as this bill will do, but a complete change to how we see electrical production, transmission and usage.

For a period of some five years, I actually sat on the East York Hydro-Electric Commission. As the mayor, I sat there with two wonderful individuals, Mr Jack Christie and Mr Bob Currie, who certainly knew the electricity system a lot better than I. I don't remember ever having these kinds of discussions with any of the people who lived in East York who had hydro delivery. I don't remember anyone ever thinking that they were ripped off by the system. I don't remember ever sending out bills 10 months after the fact. I don't ever remember having people have to come and make explanations and stay on the phone for hours and hours, because they were open and accessible. The hydroelectric commission was right in their neighbourhood. They could walk through the door Monday through Friday from 8 o'clock in the morning until 5 o'clock at night and get a representative who would deal with them immediately. Certainly we don't have that luxury any more. We have companies that we don't even know who are out selling door to door, and who, I would suggest, are ripping people off. We have companies that are run by the Ontario government that are at arm's length but are miles away and hundreds of phone calls from actually being received.

I'm kind of surprised—or maybe I shouldn't be—that all of this has transpired in the last two years. My first opportunity to actually see this face-to-face came in the by-election in late August 2001. There were a number of

all-candidates debates in Beaches-East York. I was quite surprised to see the positions of the various parties at that time in terms of privatization, or whether or not it would be a good thing. It was of no real surprise to me that the Conservatives and their candidate, Mr Penney, were totally in favour of privatization, saying it would be the panacea for all of those people who wanted to vote for him and for the Conservative Party to have hydro privatized, and that all of the profits would go back to ordinary people and how wonderful it would be because private industry could, of course, as they opined, always do it better than the public sector. It was equally surprising for me to see the Green Party and its candidate, Mr Elgie, say just about the same thing.

Mr Bisson: That is amazing.

Mr Prue: That is amazing. His view was that this was going to help green Ontario, because the private sector would be far more attuned—I can't believe this—to coal-fired generation and wanting to shut it down, and far more attuned to green energy. That was their position.

Then, of course, there was the Liberal Party position with their candidate, Mr Hunter. Mr Bob Hunter also wanted to privatize electricity, and said so at the all-candidates debates. He said so for reasons which I still do not totally fathom, but he was talking a little bit like Mr Elgie, that this was an environmental thing. He also said those same words that we hear from many Tory cabinet ministers and many of the backbenchers, that it is the private sector that can do it the best. Therefore, leave it to the private sector.

Hon Mr Wilson: Pollution Probe wants to privatize energy.

Mr Prue: Well, Pollution Probe too. There you go; another misguided group.

These three gentlemen, I would suggest to you, were totally misguided as to what was going to happen. It was only me, and I stood up there and said—and I still maintain that—for all of my life living here in the province of Ontario, for the 53 years, as I was then, or the 55 that I'm about to be now—I have never had difficulty with hydro. When you turned on the lights, they went on. When you had a problem, you could contact somebody and they would come. When there was a problem with your bill, you could pick up the phone or go in person and have it dealt with. That has started to change, sadly. That has changed in the last two years. I would suggest that people in this province have come to look for the best in hydro services, and we are now starting to deliver something which is far less than the best.

What we're delivering today—take a look at it, just for a minute. We are struggling with skyrocketing prices—prices that started out at 3.8 cents, when I first arrived here. Then they were capped at 4.3 cents, but they're actually costing us 5.6 cents, or 5.8 cents or 6 cents. That's just the energy costs. Remember, we are also charging all those poor people, those consumers, those small business people, those industries, all of those other whacking charges.

Again, just to go over those whacking charges: we are charging them for being a customer because we have to distribute the electricity, because there's a transmission charge, because there's a wholesale operations charge, and because there's a debt retirement charge. So because they are our customers, they will pay not the 4.3 cents, but probably closer to 10 cents when you actually calculate it all out. It's going up and up and up.

Today is a very hot day. I will guarantee you that you are going to see an awful lot of use today. I'm glad that the lights are still on, and I hope they stay on throughout this summer. The skyrocketing amounts of electricity that are needed, coupled with the costs of producing and buying that electricity, will make sure that there will be problems, as sure as I'm standing here.

We're looking at cost overruns in places like Pickering. Pickering and the whole nuclear thing—I was never opposed to nuclear as being unsafe, and I still am not. I believe that nuclear energy can be every bit as safe as other forms of energy. If you do it correctly, if you put the safeguards in, if you have trained personnel, then it can be every bit as safe. There is, of course, the final product, the end product. What do you do with the uranium waste? What do you do with it? How do you get rid of it? How do you make it safe for the public? That will continue to be a problem.

But the one thing about the nuclear industry is that it is expensive. It is expensive to run and it is expensive to maintain. We have seen in Pickering the cost overruns. Not only is it the cost, it's the lengthy delays that take place each and every time something needs to be refitted. We're hearing now about a June opening, then a July opening, then an August opening, and then maybe a next summer opening. This keeps going on and on and on. We have failed quite miserably, I would suggest, in terms of Pickering and nuclear.

If we as a society want to continue to go down this road, then we have to make sure that we understand that it is going to inevitably cost us a great deal more for our electricity than what those in the past have told us.

1650

We have the whole problem of expensive imports. Every time we can't produce enough electricity, there's always someone willing to sell it to us at a pretty hefty cost. I notice some of the electrical imports last summer from the United States were particularly horrendous. The costs of those imports were just enormous. What other choice do you have when you don't have the capacity yourself any more, when you've allowed the stations to run down and when you've drained the last of that lake near Wawa so that the fish are all floundering around and there's no more water in it to pump out? What do you do when it's just not possible to do it any more? What do you do with the shutdowns—because you have to have shutdowns all the time in all of the facilities for maintenance? What do you do with all the shutdowns in the little towns?

Hon Mr Wilson: The plants fell apart under the NDP.

Mr Prue: Nothing fell apart as much as it did when you were minister, with the greatest of respect—nothing at all.

Hon Mr Wilson: Mr Speaker, on a point of order: Ten of the 20 nuclear plants fell apart and went off-line under the NDP. Maybe he could get his facts—

The Acting Speaker (Mr Wayne Wettlaufer): That's not a point of order, Minister.

Mr Prue: We are now starting to see, very sadly, what is happening in small-town Ontario, particularly in the north, as industries such as mining and pulp and paper are shutting down. We are starting to see people become unemployed. We are starting to see the whole northern economy, which is resource-based and based on electricity and power and generation, coming into decline.

We have here a bill which, if anything, is misguided. Is it going to make a great deal of difference to anyone if it's passed? Probably not. Is there anyone out there who understands what this bill does? Probably not. But it is not going to solve the basic dilemma of what this party has brought to us in the last two years. The final shot of Mike Harris against his own party is something to be truly amazed at. Of all the things he ever did, the final shot was the best one. Here we have a misguided bill that's basically going to do nothing.

It reminds me of somebody who leaves a little meat out too long. You leave it out too long and it gets kind of rancid and putrid and rotten. Then what do you do with it? This bill is like attempting to put it back in the refrigerator and thinking that is somehow going to make it good again. It's not. It's still going to be that same rancid, rotten piece of meat when you take it out. You can do lots of things to it. In the Middle Ages they didn't have refrigeration. That's when they started to try to find spices. They would load all this stuff full of spices so you couldn't taste the rotten, putrid meat. I don't think spicing this up is going to work, and neither is refrigeration. This bill is simply not going to do anything.

What it is going to do is make a couple more people rich. There are two things I note from this bill that are not good things, because the rest is quite benign. The first one is that OEB staff are not regulated in terms of how much money they are going to make. We note that the new chairperson is going to make three times as much money as Floyd Laughren did before he left. This all harkens back to Eleanor Clitheroe. This is all the same thing. People will remember those huge salaries that she gave herself, the yacht, the car, the driver and all of those things. And here we have a lovely bill that is going to put that in writing, so these people can set their own salaries, starting with three times as much as the former head of the OEB. I tell you, when the public finds out about this, they won't even think this is a benign bill. It is really quite crazy to start off on a tangent like this and let these private enterprisers, these people who know how to get money from public funds and say it's private enterprise at the same time, to make such enormous salaries.

The second thing is that within the contents of this bill is pay for performance. This is undoubtedly the only

quasi-judicial tribunal in all of this country that is going to get pay for performance. There's no pay for performance at the housing tribunal, at workers' compensation, the Immigration and Refugee Board, any of the federal boards, any of the provincial boards, or even, I think, any of the municipal boards that are quasi-judicial in nature. This will be the first one—pay for performance. I would suggest this again goes down the wrong path. People who are there to judge an issue must be fair to all sides on the issue. They can't be rushing to get the job done fast so they can do another case, so they can make more money. They have to give sober second thought and real fairness to all of those who are before them.

In conclusion, we have a mess. We have a hydro system that is in a complete mess. We have here a bill that purports to do something to change it, but the reality is, the bill does little or nothing. Those parts of the bill that one can single out in terms of setting one's own salary and performance pay are, I think, objectionable. The balance of the bill—it's just not going to work. It is simply not going to work. When the brownouts and blackouts come this summer—if they do—when the price of electricity starts to rise and when the \$100 million is spent for all those special generators, remember that this bill did nothing to help it.

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I am particularly pleased to take a few moments to speak to the time allocation motion for Bill 23, which is called the Ontario Energy Board Consumer Protection and Governance Act.

I believe that I speak for pretty well everyone in this House when I say that energy is among the top concerns for our constituents. In fact, I believe it's absolutely imperative that this bill be given swift passage, which is why we're all here today. Whether it's through our riding offices or conversations that we have with people or as we travel across this province, I think it's clear that energy prices, energy supply and energy regulation are on the minds of people in Ontario. That is why this proposed legislation, Bill 23, the proposed Ontario Energy Board Consumer Protection and Governance Act, 2003, is so important.

The people of this province need to know there is a place they can turn to that will help them to make informed energy choices, that is watching out for their interests and that will act on their behalf if they have a problem they can't solve on their own. The Ontario Energy Board, or OEB, is that place, and this legislation, if passed, will greatly enhance the board's ability to protect consumers—something I think we all want in this place.

The OEB was established more than 40 years ago. It is run by talented, dedicated people. But I think last year it became fairly obvious that changes were needed. The Reliable Energy and Consumer Protection Act, 2002, went a long way to make some of the needed changes. That legislation enhanced the protection of consumers by including reforms to strengthen the OEB's powers to take action against unfair marketing and retailing practices.

The act also increased the OEB's enforcement powers and strengthened the surveillance powers of the Independent Electricity Market Operator's market surveillance panel.

Through last summer and fall, I think it became fairly clear that more needed to be done. That is when Premier Eves, in a step that should be applauded, ordered a 100-day review of the OEB and entrusted the Minister of Energy to conduct that review.

1700

My colleague the Minister of Energy has proposed legislation which is the result I think of a lot of hard work and, it should be added, included an impressive consultation process, Mr Prue. The minister invited comments from the public and from industry. He spoke to a large number of stakeholders. He listened and he acted. I want to offer my congratulations to him for a job well done. This consultation was important. It meant that this was not change for the sake of change. The consultation process meant the people, associations and companies that use the OEB had a key voice in the changes outlined in this bill, something which comes as perhaps a little bit of a strange phenomenon for people like the speaker from Beaches-East York.

This proposed legislation gives the OEB new purpose and will make it a much stronger organization. Bill 23, if passed, creates a strong, independent and well-resourced Ontario Energy Board, an OEB that can make the decisions that ensure the people of this province are treated fairly. The legislation, if passed, will also improve the effectiveness of the OEB. Bill 23 will improve the governance and accountability of the OEB, while ensuring that consumer protection remains its prime objective.

In preparing for today's debates, I did some checking. It was easy for me, as someone who has listened to many debates on energy, to recognize the importance of the OEB, but I was astonished at just how vital the OEB is to the people of this province. Did you know, for example, that last year the OEB received close to 100,000 calls at its call centre? These calls came from consumers who wanted to know about energy prices. They wanted to know about energy contracts. They wanted someone to listen to their concerns and answer their questions. To me, this shows quite clearly that Premier Eves and the Minister of Energy showed tremendous foresight last fall. They clearly understood that the people of Ontario wanted and needed a stronger, more dynamic Ontario Energy Board, and Bill 23, if passed, will do just that.

In the meantime, in the time I have left, I would like to note some of what I see as the key elements of Bill 23, the proposed Ontario Energy Board Consumer Protection and Governance Act.

The proposed legislation will make sure that the OEB has an enhanced communications role, something I think we heard from all sides of this House. I think this is an important step. The OEB did a good job of communicating with the public before, but this legislation, if passed, gives it a much clearer mandate to do so. Decisions that are made by the OEB have long-term and

far-reaching implications. The people of Ontario have a right to be properly informed, to be kept up to date on board decisions and, even more importantly, to be told why the Ontario Energy Board makes the decisions it does. This proposed legislation will ensure that all these things happen.

And when it comes to making these decisions, this legislation, if passed, streamlines and speeds up the hearing process while ensuring that consumers have a chance to offer their views. By speeding up the decision-making process, this legislation, if passed, will address the issue of retroactive decisions. Having to pay retroactive charges is difficult for consumers. If passed, Bill 23 will effectively eliminate charges that sit and accumulate month after month. This is an important step for consumers in this province, and we know that they are looking for the members of this House to give this proposed legislation swift passage.

The proposed legislation would ensure that the OEB is accountable. Accountability is what taxpayers expect. The legislation would establish an advisory committee of stakeholders, industry representatives and consumers to review the board's performance. If passed by the Legislature, this bill will allow the OEB to be self-financing and will also allow it to attract the best possible people to the industry and in the industry.

The proposed legislation will also require the OEB to establish an annual regulatory calendar that outlines priorities, increases accountability and ensures that stringent timelines are established and, more importantly, are met.

In introducing this proposed legislation, the Minister of Energy noted that he had used recent changes at the Ontario Securities Commission as a model. I think that this makes a lot of sense. The changes the Ontario Securities Commission implemented created a much stronger and a much more effective operation, and I am confident that if this bill is passed, the changes outlined will do the same for the Ontario Energy Board.

I'm here today to say that I am proud of the proposed changes this bill will bring to the OEB. I want to congratulate the Premier for ordering this review, and I congratulate the Minister of Energy for listening to what stakeholders had to say and for making sure that the energy interests of the people of Ontario will be protected for many years to come.

Mr Joseph Cordinano (York South-Weston): Yet again, it's a time allocation motion that I speak to, in the form of Bill 23. I guess it is becoming customary for us to deal with most bills in this Legislature that this government brings forward by way of time allocation motions. That goes without saying. It is unparalleled and unfortunate, and we are constantly forced to remind the government that it's no way to run a Parliament.

If you look at the past year, the House did not sit in January, February, March and April, and then this government decides to sit in May and June. Of course, I'm assuming now from the information I have that this is the last week the House will be sitting. Is it any wonder, then, that the government is forced to use time

allocation motions for everything it puts through this House?

There's simply no interest on the part of the government to allow for bills to be thoroughly debated and, more importantly, for the public to have input while the debates take place. I think that is lamentable in the extreme, because most people, in the fast and furious pace that they lead their lives, really don't have the time to keep track of what goes on in this place, unless of course there's enough time allocated for that.

Let me go on with the bill. Let me just say that with respect to the Ontario Energy Board Consumer Protection and Governance Act—that's the title—of course the government is attempting to act well after the fact, even with this bill, which does not nearly go far enough to deal with some serious problems that consumers are facing when it comes to energy in Ontario.

1710

Let me just quote what the act sets out as the number one objective of the OEB: "to facilitate competition in the generation and sale of electricity and to facilitate a smooth transition to competition." Yet this is a consumer protection act. Guess what? The number one objective has nothing to do with protecting consumers and everything to do with facilitating competition and a smooth transition to competition. In fact, it's only when you reach objective number 3 that there's any mention about the protection of consumers.

Furthermore, last week we found out that the government was allowing marketers to pursue negative-option billing. How much worse can it get for consumers? Negative-option billing was unilaterally opposed by everyone when the cable companies tried to bring it in. It's detested—and I'm sure you too found this out, Mr Speaker, in your riding—by all consumers as one of the slimiest things a company could do to a consumer. It's just absolutely outrageous that this government would allow negative-option billing to take hold when it comes to this marketplace. I see the Minister of Energy just passing me by and I hope he's listening, because everyone has renounced this negative-option billing as just detestable.

None other than the National Post, which regularly supports this government, has an article with comments regarding negative-option billing. The Consumers Council of Canada was criticizing the new regulations that were brought in. It says, "The government has no plans to inform and educate consumers about this change in the regulations. It is relying on retailers to provide clear guidance and information to consumers in their bills." Can you imagine? This is a government that purports, in Bill 23, to want to protect consumers. They're doing nothing of the kind when they allow for negative-option billing. The consumer must put in writing that they're not interested in continuing or renewing their contract with the energy marketer. The onus is on the consumer. I ask, how is the OEB protecting consumers? Where is the interest of the consumer placed in terms of priority by

this government when it's creating this bill? It's simply not anywhere to be seen.

Another matter is of importance for consumers, and this I take from the Toronto Sun in an article on June 20, last week, reminding customers who signed contracts with energy companies that if their contract is automatically renewed, they are on the hook for the higher price. In other words, customers who signed contracts with these direct marketers are not subject to the 4.3 cent per kilowatt hour cap. They'll pay the full freight for whatever they signed for. Again, it's not acting in the interests of consumers to allow for this.

I say to the government that if it was really interested in assisting consumers, the best thing, bar none, that this government could do is to bring about a full conservation plan, because by reducing demand we would certainly go a long way to stabilizing the price of energy in this province, most particularly when it comes to electricity. Yet this government is doing absolutely nothing when it comes to putting in place an energy conservation plan. I would hope the government would take the bill that I brought forward, Bill 87, which would require the broader public sector—institutions like hospitals, school boards, schools and the like, transfer recipients of this government, the partners—to conduct energy audits to ascertain where energy savings might be had in terms of implementing an energy efficiency plan. You do an audit and then an energy efficiency plan is put in place, and this would certainly reduce the amount of energy that's required.

In fact, we know that the state of California, among other jurisdictions, but the state of California in particular, which was facing an enormous electricity crisis just a few short years ago, put in place an energy conservation plan, and in the first year alone was effectively able to reduce electricity requirements by 9%. If that were to take place here in Ontario, that would amount at peak demand points to about 2,500 megawatts of power, which would be like eliminating the equivalent of two Lakeview coal-fired generating plants.

Imagine what that would do in terms of benefit for the environment: eliminating at least two coal-fired plants immediately by reducing the amount of demand for electrical power, two plants spewing and emitting the worst and most foul kind of pollution. This is the first smog day, I would remind people. When the temperature goes up over 30 degrees Celsius, we start to get smog days. Today I believe is the first smog day. The first alerts were issued today for southern Ontario and southwestern Ontario. Of course we know the seriousness of all this with respect to those who suffer from asthmatic attacks, respiratory illness, the untold number of lives that are lost—well, we know in fact that 1,200 lives are lost each year directly related to smog and air pollution.

It's a horrendous cost to our society. We could do something about it immediately by bringing about a conservation program. This government has refused to do anything in that regard. In fact, it was the select committee on alternative fuel sources which recommended

that the government bring about an energy conservation program in this province by the end of this year: December 31, 2003. It is recommendation number 50 which calls on the government to implement this plan.

My bill did receive support in the House. It is going to committee, but we know what happens to most private members' bills: they go to committee and they never see the light of day. It is a shame, because frankly this government, if it were re-elected—God forbid—does not plan to do anything about these dirty coal-fired generating plants until 2015, if you can imagine, some 12 years from now. Can you imagine, Mr Speaker? We won't be able to breathe at all by that time if we allow these coal-fired plants to continue to operate.

It's because we are so dependent, the string is pulled so tight in terms of the demand-supply relationship. Supply barely meets demand, and it most likely will not meet demand. It could even happen this year where we have blackouts or brownouts. As a result, we will be faced with a very dire situation in terms of an energy crisis in this province. I believe we're facing one. I think it is for that reason that this government should act with urgency, should bring about the energy conservation plan I talked about in my bill, and perhaps there are flaws in my bill that should be corrected, but let's have a full debate on that.

1720

Our party, under the leadership of Dalton McGuinty, plans to phase out coal-fired plants by the year 2007, and we have a plan for doing that. Part of that plan has to be conservation that is taken seriously. We have a few short years in which to do that, and this is why I hope the government is going to call an election sooner rather than later, because we need to debate this with the broader public. They deserve to have the right to decide what should happen with regard to energy usage and energy consumption in this province, and whether or not a conservation plan that calls for the government to act more quickly should be put in place sooner rather than later.

The government is being completely irresponsible when it says it's protecting the interests of consumers with regard to energy in this province. It is certainly not doing that, as I've pointed out, with negative-option billing. But it's not doing that with respect to other areas as well. They sold the 407, and what did we get? Five toll increases immediately after it was sold. That's protecting consumers? Hardly. What about insurance rates? They've gone through the roof—double-digit, 19% on average insurance rates have gone up. That's protecting consumers? Hardly. Wherever you look—and I'll not even get into user fees of all kinds that have gone up because of the downloading that's taken place over the last eight years. It goes on and on. Consumers are not being protected by this government.

I also introduced a bill to deal with credit reporting agencies and correcting people's credit history. The government has failed to act on that very important aspect of consumer protection, which is to give people a

clear and direct way to correct their credit histories. In this day and age, when we depend on credit, consumers must have a direct right to clean up any discrepancies in their credit history, and yet this government has done nothing about that.

I say to the government, you are sorely lacking and if you want to stand up as a champion of consumer rights and consumer protection, it's not washing with anybody. The evidence is clear: you have failed to act, particularly in this bill, when it comes to protecting consumers' interests.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Just a couple of remarks: first of all, I oppose strangulation motions. This government has strangled debate on so many bills it's hard to keep count. They do it—

Mr Cordiano: It's 123.

Mr Marchese: You see, other people keep count. How many?

Mr Cordiano: It's 123 or 124.

Mr Marchese: It's 124 times. That could really hurt after a while, couldn't it? How many times can you pull that string before your neck just gets short of breath and you can't speak any more on these strangulation bills?

The public is tired. The public wants debate and yet this government has forced us to be silent, has forced the public not to be able to express itself on many bills, and they have passed, over the many years, so many bills that the public can't keep track of bills, let alone how many times they've strangled debate on these various issues. The public is tired of having lost any modicum of democracy they may have had in the past. We've lost so much of democracy it's hard to be able to define it any more because the essence of a democratic society is the ability of a civic society to have the opportunity to respond to any particular bill that's introduced in this place. It's the foundation upon which democracy is built, to allow citizens and the opposition members the time to give due consideration to any bills. We haven't had that opportunity. We rarely get that opportunity.

What it speaks to is an autocratic government that doesn't give much of a hoot about whether people have their say or not. That's the kind of government we've got. Evidently, there are a lot of taxpayers out there who think this is OK. Well, it's not. Mercifully, there are a lot of citizens out there who behave as citizens and not taxpayers, who want to have their say and are demanding it in such a way that I believe they are eventually, in a couple of short months, going to get rid of this government. God bless. Godspeed. I think it's good. It's time. We are tired as opposition members and the public out there is tired. We're tired of your government. We're tired of your bills.

This is not a very good bill. It's certainly misguided. It tries to make deregulation better. This is a bit like trying to make a better typewriter instead of moving to computers. This bill does not and cannot solve the problems that deregulation has caused—not to talk about privatization of hydro, which you try to do, even though now Ernie Eves says, "No, we're not doing it," as if he—

or the Liberals for that matter, but it's not about the Liberals at this moment—never contemplated selling off Hydro One. The Tories were willing and happily ready to sell off Hydro One, and to sell off generation of power as well. So were the Liberals, by the way. Those of you citizens out there, so were the Liberals, at one point.

Mr Cordiano: Now, stick to the thing, or else I have to stand up.

Mr Marchese: But I'm sticking to the thing.

Mr Cordiano: Stick to the basics.

Mr Marchese: Yes, I'm sticking to the topic. That's why I'm attacking the Liberals as well.

Because deregulation cannot be fixed. It's like Peter Kormos says: it's an uncageable animal. You can't fix it. Unless you move to public power, you can't fix what's bad. Deregulation is bad; privatization is worse. But deregulation is the basis upon which you then privatize. Because that's what it's about.

Imagine giving these people the power to set their own salaries. It's nuts. As if giving me the power to set my own salary is going to make it better. Giving me the power, as a CEO, and others, to increase salaries as much as we want is going to make me more efficient? It's kind of nutty, isn't it? As if giving politicians more money is going to make them any better. It doesn't do it. The government knows that. Giving yourself more money does not make you better, more efficient or more competitive. It just makes certain that those people who are there in those positions are able to get the money and, God bless, be happy with what they're getting and what they give themselves. The CEO is going to have three times the salary our friend used to make, as if by giving himself three times the salary of the previous person is going to make him more efficient, more competitive or better. It doesn't. It just makes certain that that CEO is going to have more money in his pocket to spend for his or her own needs.

This government loves to give our money away. It loves to give your taxpayers' money, and it's not going to make that corporation any more efficient than it might have been, by simply giving money away. This government likes to talk about protecting taxpayers' money, "Because you earned the money and it's yours and we shouldn't be giving it away so easily." But when they want to give it away to their friends, they've got no problem giving money away to their friends. Their friends are good, big contributors to their fundraising campaigns. So when it's a matter of giving good salaries to their friends, it's not a big issue for them. This is the government that, after giving up the privatization of hydro and deciding to cap the prices to make certain that the citizens and taxpayers out there were not angry at them, has, as a result of capping prices, built up a debt, yes, and a legacy to those poor children who now have to keep paying for that debt, which is close to \$1 billion, or more.

I remember this government, when they used to talk about the boondoggle of other government initiatives, saying, "We are leaving a deficit for our children, a

legacy of deficit and debt that is terrible." But this government has no problem already passing on, by capping energy prices, \$1 billion to my children and, yes, your children as well.

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The government doesn't like to talk about that. They want to tell the citizens they capped hydro prices, so don't worry about the fact that we have hidden close to \$1 billion worth of debt and deficits that get passed down to our children. But because Tories do it, that's OK. Tories have no problem attacking other governments for passing on debt to children, but when they pass it on, it's OK. How could it be OK? It's dumb politics. It's sad politics. It's a sad legacy of a sad, tired government trying to pass more debt down to, yes, you, taxpayers and citizens.

They try to make it appear that it's not an issue or a problem. We're telling you it's a problem. We're telling you public power is the answer. We need a public system, not deregulated, not privatized, that will protect you, citizens, making certain that for the price we pay, our energy is available, reliable and constructed at cost for the needs of citizens, working people, small companies and even big companies as well, because we all profit from a reliable energy source that is built, constructed and delivered at cost and not for profit-making.

If indeed there is a profit to be made, why couldn't the government make the money and pass it back to you, taxpayers? Why couldn't we do it, instead of passing on profits to profiteers, to those who otherwise would give big bucks to the Tories to fundraise their campaigns? And, by the way, they would give it to the Liberals too. They might give \$100 less, but they would give to the Liberals in the same way. It's like going to a fundraising event for \$1,000 for the Tories and a fundraising event for \$800 for the Liberals, but it's the same group going to the same events.

We believe the answer is public power. That's what New Democrats propose and have proposed. Public power has forced this government to back away from selling Hydro One, the transmission lines and our generation plants, and has forced the Liberals to take a different position than they had taken, because initially they were quite happy to be arm in arm, in love with the Tory policies of selling Hydro One and more of the generation of our hydro power. We have resisted. We have forced the Tories back and forced the Liberals to take a different kind of position, which in the end is a victory for us all.

I just wanted to take those few moments of an opportunity to speak against this strangulation bill and leave enough time for my friend from Timmins-James Bay to complete this debate.

Hon Mr Wilson: I am pleased to rise for just a few moments to talk about the bill that the time allocation motion speaks about. I don't know why the members opposite, as the Minister of Energy said today, don't support this bill. It strengthens consumer protection. It gives the Ontario Energy Board more powers to do what

it should have been able to do all along, under both previous governments—NDP and Liberal—to make sure that the energy board has real teeth to deal with those people who are misrepresenting themselves as energy marketers, who are somehow ripping off society.

It has taken us a while, and we've learned a few things along the way, but I think this bill should be supported by all members of the House. It's probably the most non-partisan bill. We tried to show that the energy board is non-partisan when our government appointed Mr Laughren—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr David Christopherson): Sorry, Minister, I'm going to have to interrupt. There are at least four conversations going on in the House and somebody is just starting to heckle. So could we take the conversations outside the House and please give the minister the respect of listening to his remarks? Sorry, Minister. Please continue.

Hon Mr Wilson: We tried to show that the Ontario Energy Board truly is arm's length and non-partisan when we appointed Mr Laughren to that board as chair, and I think he served well during a very difficult time.

I think what the Liberals—and I heard members of that party speak this afternoon—and the NDP perhaps forget to tell the public is that deregulation of the market is not deregulation of the market. Electricity in Ontario was never regulated. Ontario Hydro in the backrooms would decide on the price of the day. Cabinet could either accept or reject that. The Ontario Energy Board, as a regulator, never had the power to set prices.

In fact, under the NDP, in about 1996-97, there were extensive public hearings about a price increase that Hydro wanted, and God knows they needed a price increase back then. One of the reasons we have a problem now is the Liberals should have done something, the NDP should have done something, rather than leave us with a bankrupt company—\$38 billion in debt—whose assets are worth \$17 billion. Anybody that owns a house, runs a business, lives in this province would know that means you are bankrupt about two and a half times over. Bob Rae and Floyd Laughren had to go to New York one time, you'll recall very well, Mr Speaker, to satisfy the bankers down there that we were going to continue to back Hydro's debt, even though it was completely out of control.

Who owns Hydro debt? NDP members own Hydro debt. You own it in mutual funds. Who owns Hydro debt? Little old ladies in our ridings own Hydro debt. They hold bonds because they were a very good deal at one time. They were producing 14% yields, when all you could get on a mutual fund or anything else was 8% or 9%. God knows, Hydro debt—go read the Globe and Mail every Monday, when they have to flip their bonds to try and get lower interest rates. Everybody owns Hydro debt. So you do a misservice to the people of Ontario when you threaten their savings, when you threaten those bonds that are embedded throughout our financial system, because Hydro damn near ran the financial system,

it owed so much bloody money in the province. You threaten their livelihood; you threaten their future. We hear about pension acts—the biggest attack you will make on pension stability and retirement is when you fail to pay off debt and when you fail to properly back up that debt.

We went forward with a plan. They say there is no plan. It's on a CD. It's 290 pages. It's called the Market Design Committee. It's so big, we didn't put it out in paper, and I'm glad we didn't, now I'm environment minister; we would have killed a few trees. We put it out on CD. It's available on-line. It's an extensive plan, with one exception. We are seeing hundreds of millions of dollars, including the TransAlta plant in Sarnia, for example, which is the private sector—450 megawatts, a \$400-million project. There are some 30 or 40 projects going on now. They take time to come on-line. Why? Because no bank would lend us the money to go out and build another nuclear plant. Coal is not acceptable. There's not enough natural gas to do mega-projects at this point; another pipeline needs to be built. Because of Liberal and NDP mismanagement, nobody was going to lend the province of Ontario another penny to build another plant in the old Ontario Hydro system. We have to go to the private sector.

If they get back into government some day, they're going to have the same solution. A unanimous report in 1998 from a committee of this House said, "You must embrace private sector partnerships and you must deregulate"—that's the term that came out of California, by the way. We were never regulated. Get your bloody facts straight. Stop threatening pensions. Stop threatening livelihoods. Pay your debts, if you ever get in government again. Be more responsible in your remarks in this House. Support this bill because, although my remarks aren't nonpartisan, this bill's nonpartisan.

Mr Bisson: There's the Jim Wilson I know and love. Didn't you see him? He was so excited. He was into it.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: Yes, say it outside, Jim. Let's go, let's go.

After he was named the Minister of the Environment after Mr Stockwell had to leave, I was watching his performance in the House. Mr Wilson was being, I thought, rather reserved. He was actually being very calm in his tone, really trying to tone things down. I've just finally seen him wake up again. So I know you're well. I'm glad you're well. I was beginning to wonder that maybe you had some kind of a 48-hour flu or something, but certainly that's not the case.

I want to say to Mr Wilson, I want to say to my good friend the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and Minister of the Environment—you forgot that, Mr Speaker; he is the Minister of the Environment as well. The whole discussion you just had here was about how this problem that you have now is one that you inherited from previous administrations. You failed to talk about one previous administration—it was here for 40-some-odd years—called the Conservative Party of Ontario. Do you remember Darlington, as a former Minister of Ener-

gy? Do you also remember, as a member of the Conservative government today, that you guys left office with \$14 billion of debt because of what you'd done on Darlington? You come over here and you try to say, "It's all the NDP's fault. It's the Liberals. They're the ones that messed everything up." You guys were in power for 50-some-odd years. You're the guys that built Darlington, cost overruns, and then governments after that tried to deal with it. Give me a break. My God.

Anyway, I thought the comments made by my good friend Mr Prue were just bang-on when he was talking a little bit earlier about this bill. He was saying that this bill's a little bit like a piece of rotten meat. I thought it was a really good point—

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): Who said that?

Mr Bisson: My good friend Mr Prue said, "This bill is like a piece of rotten meat. What the government's trying to do by way of this bill is take this piece of rotten meat, open the fridge and put it inside, hoping it's going to get better." I thought that was so bang-on as a comment because that's what they're trying to do.

1740

They kind of messed things up when it came to privatization and deregulation. In the words of the minister, he said, "We're learning from our mistakes." Well, you know what? You can put that meat inside the fridge for as long as you want, Mr Wilson; it ain't going to get better. As a matter of fact, you could put it in the freezer. When you take it out, it'll still be rotten. I want to know what's inside that sandwich bag. Is that a piece of rotten meat? Is that what that is?

I've got to say to the members across: all this bill is is an attempt to try to fix the mistakes that you created with the opening of the market in deregulation. What you're trying to do is cover up your mess. That's all this is all about.

What's worse is, by way of closure motion, the government wants to not allow the public, and those people interested, to be able to go before the committee, in order to talk on this bill and raise issues that they're worried about. For example, my good friend Tony Martin and I met with people in Wawa, Dubreuilville and White River, where they're having massive, massive layoffs because of energy prices. I'm sure that the people from River Gold, Riverdale and from across this province would like to come and talk to the government.

For that reason, I want to move an amendment for this particular motion so that we do allow some committee time to happen. I move the following motion: that Mr Baird's motion be amended by deleting everything after "dispose of the second reading stage of the bill" and replace it with the following: "at such time the bill shall be referred to the standing committee on general government." I'll send that down through the page.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Bisson has moved that the motion be amended by deleting everything after "dispose of the second reading stage of the bill" and replace it with

the following: "at such time the bill shall be referred to the standing committee on general government."

The member may resume his debate and speak to the amendment.

Mr Bisson: This is why I'm bringing the amendment forward, because people want to have an opportunity to have their say, not only individuals but also a lot of corporations.

In my riding, I represent Falconbridge, the largest utility customer in Ontario. They're the largest utility customer. One of the key issues facing Falconbridge last summer was that, when those hydro prices started spiking through the roof, Falconbridge had to decide minute by minute if they were going to operate their plant. Because is hydro rates spiked as they did last summer, they were in a position where they'd have to decide: "Is it cheaper for us to keep on operating or is it cheaper to shut down because of energy prices?" This year they're saying, "We're not taking any chances; we're shutting the plant down for three months." Granted, there are other issues—the American dollar and such—but in talking to Falconbridge, one of the key issues is that they don't want to go through what they went through last year when it comes to energy prices.

So we're saying to the government, by way of our amendment, that we want to make sure that Falconbridge, River Gold, people from various parts of the province, from Riverdale to Timmins-James Bay to Kenora to Nickel Belt to Trinity-Spadina to Beaches-East York and all other ridings, have an opportunity to come back to this Legislature this summer so that we can deal with this bill and the substantive issue, which is: what do we do about energy prices? The thing is, there's a whole bunch of people across this province, and specifically where I come from in northern Ontario, who are losing their jobs this year.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): How many?

Mr Bisson: In Timmins alone we have over 300 people who are going to be on layoff for three months. We've got 85 people who are being laid off completely. We've got the Tembec mill in Cochrane that is shutting down for an indefinite period of time. We're hoping it's going to be reopened in the fall. In Timiskaming-Cochrane, we've got the Kirkland Lake mill that's down, White River is down, Dubreuilville is down, and the list goes on.

When we sat down as part of our northern tour—my good friend Mr Martin and I travelled around the province—do you know what they said to us? They said, "Listen, we've been trying to contact the Minister of Energy. We've been trying to contact the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. We've been trying to contact the Premier because we have some real concerns around energy."

Do you know what they said to us? "Missing in action." Those were the words of an industry leader in Wawa. He said, "This government is missing in action. We call the ministers and they won't even call us back." They're saying, "Gilles and Tony, if you can do any-

thing, please go back to Queen's Park and bring the message to the government that we want them coming into our communities and dealing with us and speaking to us face to face."

We're saying, here's an opportunity. If you're not willing, as a government, to go and see those people and you refuse meeting them, as you have up to now, we're saying to allow those people to at least come to Queen's Park and to present before the committee so that they're able to have their say on this issue.

In fact, we need some time around this particular issue. I'll move a second amendment to my amendment in order to deal with the time on this. I move the following amendment: that the amendment to Mr Baird's motion be amended by adding the following: "for two weeks of public hearings and one week of clause-by-clause consideration."

The Acting Speaker: Mr Bisson has moved an amendment to the amendment, that the amendment to Mr Baird's motion be amended by adding the following: "for two weeks of public hearings and one week of clause-by-clause consideration." You may speak to the amendment to the amendment.

Mr Bisson: I raise that point that we need at least two weeks. I would like to have more. Quite frankly, my colleagues and I know other people who would like to have more time at committee, but we know that this government has an aversion to committee hearings. In fact, they've even got an aversion to debate. That's why we're in time allocation this afternoon. We're saying that it's a reasonable proposal that we put forward as New Democrats to give the people of Ontario an opportunity for two weeks this summer to come before the committee in order to say, "Here's what we think is wrong in the hydro issue; here's what we think you need to be doing." I'm fairly confident that most people are going to come back and they're going to say but one thing: hydro deregulation doesn't work. Kill the beast. Slay the beast. Stop it. Don't go there any more.

Mr Marchese: It's uncageable.

Mr Bisson: It's uncageable, as my good friend Mr Rosario Marchese raised. Once we're done with that, then we need to have some time as a committee to sit down for a week to deal with amendments to this bill so that we can make this bill work.

We're saying that trying to put the genie back in the bottle by way of this bill is like, as Mr Prue said, the piece of rotten meat." It ain't going to work. Here we are in a situation where the minister, who used to be Minister of Energy and is now Minister of Northern Development and Mines, says, "We're learning by our mistakes. That's why we're bringing this bill here." Wow. Normally they'd make you resign for saying that. But we don't want Mr Wilson to resign at this point. We're saying that at the very least what we want to have is some committee hearings.

I want to give the government some time to think about this, and I would move—

Hon Mr Baird: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I have a serious concern with respect to the motion that's before you. I'd like to refer you to the standing orders, the section with respect to official languages and their use in this place.

I think it would be appropriate that all members of the House, including those who are francophone, have the opportunity to have motions and amendments presented in French. I think that's an important consideration. I think the motions that we've given in advance have had the opportunity to be translated, if that's something that's required. I think it is imperative for all members of the House that we do have Bill 8, projet de loi 8. In Bill 8 is a very clear and definitive statement that the work of this chamber must be conducted in both French and English. I would ask that you look at the standing orders and make a determination whether it's reasonable that a member could require or ask that these things be done in French.

The Acting Speaker: There is nothing out of order. Since you raised a point of order, I will rule against that. Therefore, Mr Bisson still has the floor.

Hon Mr Baird: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask you to look at the standing orders to make a determination from the standing orders if notice of an amendment is required before 5 o'clock.

The Acting Speaker: No, I'm sorry.

Mr Bisson: I move—

The Acting Speaker: You have the floor.

Mr Bisson: I would move adjournment of the House.

Hon Mr Baird: It's past the clock.

The Acting Speaker: No, he still had the floor.

I have a motion to adjourn—sorry, adjourn the House or debate?

Mr Bisson: The House.

The Acting Speaker: A motion to adjourn the House.

All those in favour, please indicate.

All those opposed, please say "nay."

It's my opinion the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1750 to 1820.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Bisson has moved adjournment of the House.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until counted by the Clerk.

Thank you. Please take your seats.

All those opposed will please rise and remain standing until counted by the Clerk.

Thank you. Please be seated.

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 23; the nays are 45.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

Mr Bisson has moved an amendment to the amendment, that the amendment to Mr Baird's motion be amended by adding the following, "for two weeks of public hearings and one week of clause-by-clause consideration."

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1823 to 1833.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until counted by the Clerk.

My mistake. I apologize. The count on this one is different from the previous one. Please take your seats.

All those in favour of the motion will rise one at a time and be counted by the Clerk.

Ayes

Bartolucci, Rick	Dombrowsky, Leona	Patten, Richard
Bisson, Gilles	Duncan, Dwight	Peters, Steve
Brown, Michael A.	Hampton, Howard	Prue, Michael
Churley, Marilyn	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Conway, Sean G.	Levac, David	Ramsay, David
Cordiano, Joseph	Marchese, Rosario	Ruprecht, Tony
Crozier, Bruce	Martel, Shelley	Sergio, Mario
Di Cocco, Caroline	Parsons, Ernie	

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed to the motion will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Baird, John R.	Guzzo, Garry J.	Mushinski, Marilyn
Barrett, Toby	Hardeman, Ernie	Newman, Dan
Beaubien, Marcel	Hudak, Tim	O'Toole, John
Chudleigh, Ted	Jackson, Cameron	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Clark, Brad	Johnson, Bert	Runciman, Robert W.
Clement, Tony	Kells, Morley	Sampson, Rob
Coburn, Brian	Klees, Frank	Spina, Joseph
Cunningham, Dianne	Marland, Margaret	Sterling, Norman W.
DeFaria, Carl	Martiniuk, Gerry	Stewart, R. Gary
Dunlop, Garfield	Maves, Bart	Tsubouchi, David H.
Ecker, Janet	Mazzilli, Frank	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Elliott, Brenda	McDonald, AL	Wilson, Jim
Galt, Doug	Miller, Norm	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gilchrist, Steve	Molinari, Tina R.	Wood, Bob
Gill, Raminder	Munro, Julia	

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 23; the nays are 44.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

Mr Bisson has moved the following amendment:

"That Mr Baird's motion be amended by deleting everything after 'dispose of the second reading stage of the bill' and replacing it with the following: 'at such time the bill shall be referred to the standing committee on general government.'"

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

Those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be another 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1836 to 1846.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment will please rise one at a time and be counted by the Clerk.

Ayes

Bartolucci, Rick	Dombrowsky, Leona	Peters, Steve
Bisson, Gilles	Duncan, Dwight	Prue, Michael
Brown, Michael A.	Hampton, Howard	Pupatello, Sandra
Churley, Marilyn	Hoy, Pat	Ramsay, David

Conway, Sean G.
Cordiano, Joseph
Crozier, Bruce
Di Cocco, Caroline

Levac, David
Marchese, Rosario
Martel, Shelley
Parsons, Ernie

Ruprecht, Tony
Sergio, Mario

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be counted by the Clerk.

Nays

Baird, John R.	Guzzo, Garry J.	Mushinski, Marilyn
Barrett, Toby	Hardeman, Ernie	Newman, Dan
Beaubien, Marcel	Hudak, Tim	O'Toole, John
Chudleigh, Ted	Jackson, Cameron	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Clark, Brad	Johnson, Bert	Runciman, Robert W.
Clement, Tony	Kells, Morley	Sampson, Rob
Coburn, Brian	Klees, Frank	Spina, Joseph
Cunningham, Dianne	Marland, Margaret	Sterling, Norman W.
DeFaria, Carl	Martiniuk, Gerry	Stewart, R. Gary
Dunlop, Garfield	Maves, Bart	Tsubouchi, David H.
Ecker, Janet	Mazzilli, Frank	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Elliott, Brenda	McDonald, AL	Wilson, Jim
Galt, Doug	Miller, Norm	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gilchrist, Steve	Molinari, Tina R.	Wood, Bob
Gill, Raminder	Munro, Julia	

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 22; the nays are 44.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

Mr Baird has moved government notice of motion number 55.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be another 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1849 to 1859.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be counted by the Clerk.

Ayes

Baird, John R.	Guzzo, Garry J.	Mushinski, Marilyn
Barrett, Toby	Hardeman, Ernie	Newman, Dan
Beaubien, Marcel	Hudak, Tim	O'Toole, John
Chudleigh, Ted	Jackson, Cameron	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Clark, Brad	Johnson, Bert	Runciman, Robert W.
Clement, Tony	Kells, Morley	Sampson, Rob
Coburn, Brian	Klees, Frank	Spina, Joseph
Cunningham, Dianne	Marland, Margaret	Sterling, Norman W.
DeFaria, Carl	Martiniuk, Gerry	Stewart, R. Gary
Dunlop, Garfield	Maves, Bart	Tsubouchi, David H.
Ecker, Janet	Mazzilli, Frank	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Elliott, Brenda	McDonald, AL	Wilson, Jim
Galt, Doug	Miller, Norm	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gilchrist, Steve	Molinari, Tina R.	Wood, Bob
Gill, Raminder	Munro, Julia	

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be counted by the Clerk.

Nays

Bartolucci, Rick	Dombrowsky, Leona	Peters, Steve
Bisson, Gilles	Duncan, Dwight	Prue, Michael
Brown, Michael A.	Hampton, Howard	Pupatello, Sandra
Churley, Marilyn	Hoy, Pat	Ramsay, David
Conway, Sean G.	Levac, David	Ruprecht, Tony
Cordiano, Joseph	Marchese, Rosario	Sergio, Mario
Crozier, Bruce	Martel, Shelley	
Di Cocco, Caroline	Parsons, Ernie	

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 44; the nays are 22.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Hon Mr Baird: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to ask for unanimous consent that the House do sit this evening.

The Acting Speaker: The government House leader has requested unanimous consent for the House to sit this

evening. Is it the pleasure of the House? All those opposed? There are definitely some nays, so that is not going to happen.

It now being well past 6:45 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 1902.

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Fourth Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Quatrième session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 24 June 2003

Mardi 24 juin 2003



Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 24 June 2003

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 24 juin 2003

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ROGER NEILSON

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I'm sure I speak on behalf of all members in the House; I wish to pay tribute to Roger Neilson, assistant coach of the Ottawa Senators, who passed away on Saturday last after a long-term battle with cancer.

Roger Neilson was best known as a hockey coach. Indeed, hockey was his life. He was inducted last November into the Hockey Hall of Fame, and six weeks ago he received the Order of Canada, Canada's highest medal of honour, from the Governor General.

As the assistant coach of the Sens he was determined to see the last game of the season through. Indeed, he saw them one goal away from the Stanley Cup finals on April 13, the last game he coached.

During his career he coached over 1,000 NHL games, representing 10 different NHL teams.

Roger and I bonded over cancer treatment and, in particular, complementary treatments for cancer, albeit too late.

Roger Neilson was a caring man. Roger Neilson was a religious man. Roger Neilson was a teacher who ran hockey camps for youth and inspired them to perform their best. Roger Neilson was a man who loved life. Roger Neilson was an icon.

I want to pass on my condolences, and I'm sure those of all the members in the House, to his family and to his many friends throughout the hockey world and to his immediate family, the Ottawa Senators organization.

SERBIAN PICNIC

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): First, I'd like to thank the great member from Nipissing, the hard-working AL McDonald, for giving me his statement space today.

Thousands of Serbians will gather this weekend to celebrate their 58th annual picnic. The event is held every year on the grounds of St George Serbian Orthodox Church in Niagara Falls. As always, it is quite fitting that this year's picnic closely coincides with Canada Day, as

the Serbian people have contributed so much to the history and development of Canada.

An estimated 10,000 Serbs attended the event last year, with many travelling from all over Ontario as well as from US states, including Pennsylvania, Michigan and Illinois. Some even attended from as far away as Australia.

Everyone can look forward to this magnificent weekend with traditional Serbian food, dance and music, organized by the Serbian Orthodox Church along with the Serbian National Shield Society.

Unfortunately I am unable to attend this year's picnic, as I will be at a wedding near Montreal. I'm disappointed, because I always look forward to this weekend each and every year, as it is a wonderful opportunity to spend time with my many friends in the local Serbian community. It is also an opportunity for me to celebrate my roots, as my grandfather on my mother's side was Serbian.

I encourage my colleagues in the House today to inform any Serbian constituents in their ridings to look into attending this weekend's picnic in Niagara Falls.

MISSISSAGI RIVER DAMS

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): As Yogi said, "Déjà vu all over again." It's Canada, it's summer, it's hot and the air conditioners will be gobbling up electricity. The Eves government does not have enough electricity supply—its \$100-million worth of fossil-fuelled generators aren't ready—but the Mississagi River system dams are just waiting to meet the demand.

Last summer my office responded in mid-July to severe drops on Tunnel Lake. On the Saturday of the August long weekend, I spent the afternoon with stakeholders and the Great Lakes Power company trying to get a stabilization agreement for the lake and for the river levels. GLP managers told us, "It's too late for Rocky Island Lake. We've used all the water and there is no more, but we'll try to stabilize Tunnel Lake and the rest of the system." For most of the summer, the rest of the system was held relatively stable.

After discussions with the Ministry of Natural Resources and local stakeholders, Brascan has agreed to voluntarily hold Rocky Island Lake at reasonable levels this summer, but we need the Eves government to commit that the publicly owned Independent Market Operator will not order the hydro stations to operate regardless of the environmental impact.

Last summer, the IMO ordered irresponsible operations on the river. Ernie Eves must commit that the river system will be operated in accordance, not with the hopelessly inadequate existing management plan, but at least in the manner agreed to by the stakeholders.

Let's not have déjà vu all over again.

CONCERT FOR TORONTO

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): This past weekend there was an event in Toronto called the Concert for Toronto, and by all accounts it was very successful. But the one place it was not successful was that everyone except the workers who actually work and live here had jobs at this event.

The labour was flown in from Winnipeg, the labour was flown in from Vancouver, the labour was flown in from the United States to work this concert. Twenty to 30 people who work in this city at events like Lion King and Mamma Mia, who are facing layoffs, were not given an opportunity to work. It is also clear that the big video-trons that were at the locations were American—they came from Clear Channel—and those workers were also flown in from California to operate them, even though we have the facility to do it here. This was a \$150,000 contract alone that was given to Clear Channel, and about 20 workers there as well did not get jobs in rigging, in labour and in cameras.

We're going to have the Rolling Stones concert here in, I guess, about another six weeks. I would suggest that the government of Ontario and the government of Canada do everything possible to ensure that the workers who are capable of putting on that show get first crack at the jobs and that they not be brought in from other locations. If the people here truly want to help those who are hurting because of SARS, at least give them the opportunity to do the work.

1340

VOLUNTEERS

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): I am deeply honoured to have this opportunity to recognize the extraordinary voluntary service of five dedicated members of the St John Ambulance, Mississauga Branch. These five individuals each gave in excess of 1,000 hours of voluntary service in 2002. This is truly an amazing achievement when, these days, there are so many competing pressures on everyone's personal time.

David Yam, the divisional superintendent, donated an incredible 2,785 hours of his personal time as leader of the patient care volunteer division. Andrew Ling, who covered mostly weekday and daytime duty requests, gave 1,863 hours as a patient care volunteer. Chris Shim, who donated 1,536 hours, not only provided first aid service at public events but also edited the division's electronic newsletter for its members. Augusto da Silva gave 1,311 hours as a patient care volunteer and was also very involved with the recruitment and orientation of new

volunteers. Finally, Michael Thomas donated 1,011 hours developing the Erindale campus response team at University of Toronto at Mississauga and providing first aid duties at public events.

There are simply no adequate words to thank these exceptional individuals who volunteered what would have been between 29 and 80 standard work weeks to St John Ambulance in a single year. You are all our heroes. Our whole community salutes your monumental efforts.

SKILLS TRAINING

Mr Gregory S. Sorbara (Vaughan-King-Aurora): Everyone who knows anything about the construction industry knows that the shortage of skilled trades is the most urgent problem facing the industry today. Presumably, that is why two years ago, the government introduced the strategic skills investment program, a program to use public funds to leverage private sector investment in a wide variety of training initiatives. Presumably, that is why 18 months ago, the government awarded \$1.8 million to the joint apprenticeship and training trust fund of local 27 of the carpenters' union. The investment represented public participation in a \$7-million-plus investment by the private sector in a state-of-the-art training centre for carpenters.

Last September, Minister Flaherty, the minister responsible for the program, and I were centre stage with local 27 and the fund at the groundbreaking ceremony for the new building that will house the training centre. It's in my riding of Vaughan-King-Aurora. The ceremony was a great photo opportunity for the minister. But since that time, the minister and his ministry have done whatever they could to avoid signing a final agreement with the training trust fund. Despite dozens of meetings and a series of amendments, the minister has not acted, no deal has been signed and no investment has been made. This shell game has got to stop and it's got to stop today. Construction of the facility is almost complete. Equipping it depends upon the minister honouring his commitment—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the member's time is up.

AILS CRAIG HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): I rise today to tell my fellow members about the Ailsa Craig and District Historical Society and the grand opening of its new location. The historical society has moved its collection of artefacts into the former Ailsa Craig Baptist Church, which has been renamed the Donald Hughes Annex, in recognition of Mr Hughes's generous donation of the building.

The former Baptist church was restored for this purpose with the help of a \$57,600 grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. I'm pleased to see our government invest in this kind of local museum which enhances the

quality of life for the residents of small communities like Ailsa Craig.

This group was started in 1996 by 12 individuals interested in preserving their local history. There are now more than 100 members who, by last year, had raised almost \$100,000. Those funds cover the operating expenses of the museum and pay the mortgage on their existing location in the former Ailsa Craig Trinity United Church, which will now be converted into a chapel and meeting hall.

The efforts of this group will ensure that the history of this area and the lifestyles of those early settlers in rural Ontario are preserved for future generations.

The grand opening of the newly renovated annex will be held this coming weekend, and I look forward to taking a tour and learning a bit more about the rich history of this part of my riding.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): The session is coming to an end, so I thought I would update members and our friends watching at home on the government's record this session.

First of all, the federal House of Commons has sat for 73 days. Do you know how many days the provincial House will have sat this year? Just 34, less than half the federal House.

Here's another interesting fact: in their platform, the Tories promised to make legislative committees more effective and meaningful. How many committee hearings have we had on a government bill? Was it 10, nine, eight? No, none. Nada. Zero. Not one day of committee hearings from a government that in its platform promises more hearings.

All the members of my party are familiar with ending mandatory retirement, and we support that. Is this bill going to get passed? No, it's not going to get passed because we've had no debate on it. We've had no committee hearings on it. This government's all talk on that issue and no action. Have they called it for second reading? No. Have they sent it for debate? No. Have they sent it to committee? No. Will they try to pass it with meaningful hearings, meaningful debate? No; they won't get it. The House never sits, committees never debate bills and the government's promises languish.

It's time for change in Ontario. It's time for Dalton McGuinty and an Ontario Liberal government.

SALMON SPECTACULAR FISHING DERBY

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I rise in the House today to inform my fellow colleagues and their friends of an upcoming event in my riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. The 16th Annual Salmon Spectacular Fishing Derby will take place August 22 to August 31 on the waters of Owen Sound and Colpoys Bay.

The derby is put on by the Sydenham Sportsmen's Association, which will utilize over 350 volunteer members and volunteer sponsors.

The 10-day event is one of the largest and longest-running fishing derbies across North America. This year, virtually every day is filled with special events packed with activities for the whole family.

On both Saturdays, enjoy the Molson's Monster Fish Fries, where we are proud to serve between 2,000 and 4,000 hungry friends who travel miles to partake in the annual event.

Numerous prizes are awarded daily and various musical talent will be ready to entertain folks in the evenings. There will be designated days for children and seniors, and it is anticipated that Elvis will be stopping by again. The festivities will finish up on Sunday as \$125,000 in prizes are given away to our best anglers.

All the money raised by the Salmon Spectacular goes toward helping fishery conservation projects, including operating the club's salmon and trout hatcheries.

I invite all of you to come up to Owen Sound for a great time and to support the 16th Annual Salmon Spectacular Fishing Derby. I know you've been there, Mr Speaker.

VISITORS

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I wonder if the members might join me in welcoming a large group from the area I represent, the Carefirst Seniors and Community Association.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): We welcome our guests.

We also have today in the Speaker's gallery Mr John Quirke, the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut. Please join me in welcoming our very special guest.

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: You would probably have noticed a few polar bears sitting on desks. I would ask unanimous consent that one be distributed to each member in this House and also to the pages.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Agreed? Agreed. If I could, for all members, ask that we ask for unanimous consent before we put them on the desks. In this case, I'm sure no one would—

Interjections.

The Speaker: I never thought of that. Actually, they could be tossed. I would ask all members to ask for unanimous consent before they do it in the future, just because it does make for difficulty for the staff. They are instructed not to put anything on, regardless if it's something very interesting like this, or it could be more controversial. So I would ask for that in the future. The member does have unanimous consent.

1350

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: As members would know, Polar

Bear Provincial Park is in my riding and I support what the member is trying to do. But I just want to point out that if these were all black bears and they would be down here, we wouldn't have them in our backyards in Timmins. If you could have the black bears come down, we'll be happy.

The Speaker: We can even make statements about polar bears.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I thank you for this opportunity. I would like to ask for unanimous consent to declare Ontario's second smog day of summer 2003 Smog Day Clement. Can I have consent for that?

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

I'm afraid I heard some noes.

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask for unanimous consent to have permission to have the Franco-Ontarian flag on members' desks since it is Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day today.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Agreed? Agreed.

I thank the member for asking before it was on there, although I think it was on.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I beg leave to present the report on corporations tax from the standing committee on public accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Mr Gerretsen presents the committee report and moves the adoption of its recommendations.

Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr Gerretsen: The report has 12 recommendations, and I'll just highlight a few of them. It states that, "The Ministry of Finance should report ... on the success of electronic filings for corporate tax returns and the action taken to provide a corporate education program to encourage this approach for large and small corporations."

It also should report "on the administrative procedures implemented to ensure timely and accurate updates on information added to the tax roll and corporate information profiles."

Finally, it "should develop procedures to ensure that accounts are not closed without meeting all of the established criteria. Specifically, an account should not be closed unless it has been determined that the corporation is inactive and not in arrears while still registered as active with the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services."

It should also report "on the progress made under its follow-up initiative to address the backlog of corporations in default of filing tax returns."

There are 12 good recommendations that we hope the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services will not only take under consideration but will actually implement. With that, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker: Mr Gerretsen moves the adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Gerretsen: The standing committee on public accounts has been very active because we have another report to present on the training division of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. I move the adoption of its recommendations.

Interjection: You're Chair of this committee. You work hard.

The Speaker: Mr Gerretsen presents the committee report and moves the adoption of the recommendations.

Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr Gerretsen: I hear my colleague here saying, "The Chairman works very hard." I will tell you, all the committee members on all sides of the House work very hard on this committee.

There are five recommendations in this report. It states, amongst others, that "the ministry should review current legislation to ensure it allows flexibility for potential apprentices to gain some initial experience in a trade without registering."

It should also "ensure that all third-party agencies are fully aware of and follow prudent purchasing and project management practices, as is required by the Ministry of Management Board of Cabinet, and that it report to the committee within 120 days of the tabling of this document with the Speaker on the literacy and basic skills system's costs and effectiveness."

With that, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker: Mr Gerretsen moves the adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

VISITORS

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Minister of the Environment): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In a follow-up to yesterday concerning the Baulke family in Collingwood, Ryan Baulke is one of our pages here and his father Tom was a page in the early 1970s. Today, a friend of the family is visiting in the gallery, Anson MacKeracher; Ryan's mother, Laurie Baulke; and his grandmother, Norma Judges. Welcome.

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): On a point of order, Mr speaker: I know that everyone in the assembly today would like to welcome Cathy Splinter, from Amherstview. Cathy is the mother of our page Sarah Splinter.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

POLAR BEAR PROTECTION ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LA PROTECTION DES OURS POLAIRES

Mrs Mushinski moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 122, An Act to provide protection for polar bears /
Projet de loi 122, Loi visant à protéger les ours polaires.

Interjection: Did you say "bear" or "Baird"?

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): As my mother would say, if you give it to one, you have to give it to everyone.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?
Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): This bill requires a person to have a licence issued by the minister responsible for the administration of the bill in order to possess a polar bear or to export or attempt to export a polar bear from Ontario. The bill sets out standards for the care and treatment of polar bears for which a person holds a licence.

I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce Dr William Rapley and Dr David Barney, who are both from the Metropolitan Toronto Zoo and take care of Inukshuk, our little orphan polar bear.

MEGA-HOG FARM CONTROL ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LE CONTRÔLE DES GROSSES EXPLOITATIONS PORCINES

Mr Lalonde moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 123, An Act to control mega-hog farms / Projet de loi 123, Loi visant à contrôler les grosses exploitations porcines.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will please say "aye."

All opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell):

The bill deems mega hog farms to be identified as industrial for the purposes of the official plan of the municipality where the farm is located. Owners of mega hog farms are required to ensure that an environmental assessment is completed. The operation of a megafarm is not a normal farm practice under the Farming and Food Production Protection Act.

After watching 60 Minutes on CBS last Sunday, we should all support this bill for second and third reading.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent for second and third reading of Bill 110, An Act to amend the

Employment Standards Act, so that every worker can have a long weekend this July 1 weekend.

The Speaker: Same point of order, Minister?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We were amicable, but now we all have to come back to work on Monday.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?
I'm afraid I heard some noes.

MOTIONS

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, Government House Leader): I move that the standing committee on public accounts be authorized to release any reports during the upcoming recess by depositing them with the Clerk of the House.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Agreed? Agreed.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, Government House Leader): I move that, notwithstanding the order of the House dated Monday, June 2, 2003, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(ii), the House shall meet from 6:45 pm to 12:00 am on Tuesday, June 24, 2003, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Mr Baird has moved that, notwithstanding standing order—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispense?

Interjections.

The Speaker: You'd like to hear it? Mr Baird moves that, notwithstanding the order of the House dated Monday, June 2, 2003, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(ii), the House shall meet from 6:45 pm to 12:00 am on Tuesday, June 24, 2003, for the purpose of considering government business.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1401 to 1406.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic
Arnott, Ted

Elliott, Brenda
Galt, Doug

Murdoch, Bill
Mushinski, Marilyn

Baird, John R.
Barrett, Toby
Bartolucci, Rick
Beaubien, Marcel
Bountrogianni, Marie
Boyer, Claudette
Bradley, James J.
Bryant, Michael
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Brad
Cleary, John C.
Clement, Tony
Coburn, Brian
Colle, Mike
Conway, Sean G.
Cordiano, Joseph
Crozier, Bruce
DeFaria, Carl
Di Cocco, Caroline
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duncan, Dwight
Dunlop, Garfield
Ecker, Janet

Gerretsen, John
Gilchrist, Steve
Gill, Raminder
Hardeman, Ernie
Hodgson, Chris
Hoy, Pat
Hudak, Tim
Jackson, Cameron
Johns, Helen
Johnson, Bert
Klees, Frank
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Levac, David
Marland, Margaret
Martiniuk, Gerry
Maves, Bart
Mazzilli, Frank
McDonald, AL
McLeod, Lyn
McMeekin, Ted
Molinari, Tina R.
Munro, Julia

Newman, Dan
O'Toole, John
Patten, Richard
Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Pupatello, Sandra
Ramsay, David
Runciman, Robert W.
Ruprecht, Tony
Sampson, Rob
Sergio, Mario
Sorbara, Greg
Spina, Joseph
Sterling, Norman W.
Stewart, R. Gary
Tascona, Joseph N.
Tsubouchi, David H.
Turnbull, David
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Wood, Bob
Young, David

début du 17^e siècle. Il s'agit donc d'une journée spéciale qui vise à reconnaître les belles qualités de la communauté francophone.

Depuis ma nomination en tant que ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones, j'ai eu l'occasion de rencontrer des francophones de tous les âges et de tous les milieux, partout en province. Ces gens sont entièrement dévoués à la préservation de leur langue, et avec raison, puisque la diversité culturelle a fait de l'Ontario un meilleur endroit pour tous et enrichit notre façon de vivre.

Notre gouvernement reconnaît leur contribution et s'est engagé à protéger et à promouvoir les services en français. Parmi nos réalisations, on compte la création de 12 conseils scolaires de langue française, le financement de services de lignes de crise pour les femmes francophones victimes de violence, et un investissement dans le Fonds d'aide à la petite enfance veillant à la création de programmes pour le développement des jeunes enfants.

La semaine dernière, le gouvernement a donné 200,000 \$ à Destination Nord pour la promotion du nord-est de l'Ontario en tant que destination touristique intéressante pour le marché francophone.

La présence francophone en Ontario remonte à plus de 350 ans. La Saint-Jean-Baptiste est l'occasion idéale pour exprimer notre appréciation de la grande contribution des francophones à la société. La communauté francophone de l'Ontario constitue la majorité des francophones hors Québec au Canada.

J'aimerais souligner la présence des francophones et leur importante contribution à notre culture et à notre économie. Je vous invite donc à vous joindre à moi pour souhaiter à tous les francophones une joyeuse fête de la Saint-Jean-Baptiste.

La langue française est une langue historique et honorée par l'Ontario, et la Législature de l'Ontario reconnaît l'héritage culturel de la population francophone et compte bien le préserver pour les générations futures.

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): C'est un honneur pour moi de souligner aujourd'hui cette grande fête, la fête de la Saint-Jean-Baptiste, le patron de tous les francophones de cette planète.

La fête de la Saint-Jean-Baptiste était célébrée tous les 24 juin bien avant qu'elle devienne la fête nationale des Québécois. À l'époque, des peuples païens célébraient le solstice d'été par un grand feu de joie, symbolisant la lumière qui était à l'apogée. Puis la France catholique a conservé la tradition du feu de joie pour célébrer la naissance du saint Jean-Baptiste.

La fête, qui était alors religieuse, était donc très importante pour les Français catholiques. Dans la nuit du 23 au 24 juin, le roi de France allumait le feu de la Saint-Jean. Évidemment, la tradition a continué en Nouvelle-France, où il y a eu les premiers défilés.

Lors du défilé, il y avait une personne qui portait les vestiges les plus précieux du régime français, ainsi que le drapeau du régiment de Carillon, souvent appelé le

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles
Churley, Marilyn
Hampton, Howard

Kormos, Peter
Marchese, Rosario
Martel, Shelley

Prue, Michael

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 75; the nays are 7.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

FÊTE DE LA SAINT-JEAN-BAPTISTE

L'hon John R. Baird (ministre de l'Énergie, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones, leader parlementaire du gouvernement): Je demande le consentement unanime pour permettre des déclarations à l'occasion de la fête de la Saint-Jean-Baptiste, et que celles-ci se limitent à trois minutes par parti ainsi qu'à trois minutes pour la députée indépendante.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Une voix.

L'hon M. Baird: Oui, Norman Sterling a appuyé fortement la résolution.

Je vous remercie, monsieur le Président. J'aimerais prendre quelques minutes pour rendre hommage à la communauté francophone en cette journée de la Saint-Jean-Baptiste.

Comme plusieurs d'entre vous le savent sans doute, la Saint-Jean-Baptiste est un jour où tous les francophones d'un océan à l'autre célèbrent leur héritage culturel. C'est une journée au cours de laquelle les gens parlent de leurs réalisations et pensent à leur avenir avec espoir.

La fête de la Saint-Jean-Baptiste remonte à l'époque où le christianisme commençait à s'implanter en France. La fête a été transportée en Nouvelle-France avec les Français installés dans la région du Saint-Laurent. La Saint-Jean-Baptiste est célébrée au Canada depuis le

drapeau fleurdelisé, qui avait été témoin de la victoire de Montcalm.

La fête de la Saint-Jean-Baptiste était la fierté des Français et elle l'est toujours dans toutes les communautés francophones.

Cette année, les festivités de la Saint-Jean pour l'Ontario ont débuté vendredi soir dernier dans ma circonscription, plus précisément dans la communauté de Casselman. Nous avons pu assister au festival l'Écho d'un peuple, suivi par le défilé de la Saint-Jean dimanche dernier. Des milliers de personnes y assistaient et ce fut un immense succès. J'aimerais féliciter et remercier ses organisateurs, l'équipe de Francoscénie et les centaines de bénévoles qui ont travaillé depuis plusieurs mois pour assurer le succès de cette grande fête.

Les gens ont pu, entre autres, revivre des coutumes d'autrefois en y participant à travers de nombreux spectacles et activités jamais vus dans la région. Chapeau haut à Sylvain Charlebois et toute son équipe.

La langue française et présente dans notre province depuis plus de 350 ans et le français et l'une des langues officielles du Canada. En Ontario, il jouit du statut de langue officielle devant les tribunaux, dans l'éducation et à l'Assemblée législative.

À ne pas oublier : le 21 juin 2001, l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario a officiellement reconnu l'emblème de la communauté francophone de l'Ontario par son drapeau, qui est devenu le septième emblème officiel de la province.

La vie culturelle et communautaire francophone bouillonne en Ontario. Aujourd'hui, je souhaite bonne fête de la Saint-Jean-Baptiste à vous tous et toutes, et je partage avec vous notre fierté de faire vivre à chaque jour le français autour de nous.

Je suis fier d'être Canadien, je suis fier d'être Ontarien et je suis grandement fier d'être Franco-Ontarien.

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Je suis francophone et je suis fier. Aujourd'hui, c'est la journée où tous les francophones autour du monde, un milliard de francophones dans quelque 60 pays, ont la chance de se rappeler de toutes les luttes qu'on a eues comme francophones à travers nos juridictions. Ici en Ontario, on sait que cela n'a pas toujours été facile. Les francophones ont fallu se battre pour avoir les services, le peu de services que l'on a en place. Mais le message qu'on amène comme communauté aujourd'hui à travers cette province est qu'il y a encore beaucoup de travail à faire, et la communauté francophone va continuer dans la direction de s'assurer que ce n'est pas seulement pour protéger les programmes français pour les francophones de cette province mais pour promouvoir des programmes, pour s'assurer que, comme francophones, on peut vivre en français dans notre province et se servir des programmes de notre gouvernement.

Aujourd'hui, on a eu l'occasion, avec mes collègues M. Prue et M. Marchese, d'hisser officiellement le drapeau franco-ontarien ici devant l'Assemblée. C'est une cérémonie qui a eu lieu à travers la province. On sait que dans des communautés comme Kapuskasing,

Timmins, Hearst et autres à travers la province ils ont eu l'occasion de faire de même.

J'ai demandé aujourd'hui au ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones que, officiellement, on assure que le drapeau franco-ontarien ne soit pas hissé seulement une fois par année devant l'Assemblée législative mais, autrement, que l'on hisse ce drapeau pour 365 jours par année. Je vais le demander un peu plus tard cet après-midi, une fois que les déclarations seront finies, pour avoir cette déclaration unanime. J'espère que le gouvernement va l'approuver.

L'autre point que j'ai à faire, M. le Président, comme j'ai dit au début : pour les francophones cela n'a pas toujours été facile. Il y a encore beaucoup de services que l'on a besoin d'aller chercher. Moi, je suis fier d'être membre du Parti néo-démocratique, le seul parti dans la province d'avoir officiellement un programme pour les francophones dans notre campagne électorale et dans notre programme électoral qui va avoir lieu pour les élections à venir. On comprend, comme néo-démocrates, qu'il est important que les francophones ne se fassent pas simplement dire qu'ils sont les bienvenus, mais que les programmes sont là; qu'il est important d'avoir des centres de santé communautaires à travers la province où les francophones peuvent aller rechercher des services dont ils ont besoin, de s'assurer qu'à travers le système de santé, on répond aux besoins de la communauté, de s'assurer que le système juridique répond bien aux besoins des francophones de cette province et autres services que l'on connaît tous.

Je m'engage comme francophone, comme néo-démocrate, à continuer la lutte pour nous assurer que les services en français soient mis en place pour tous les francophones de la province, pour pouvoir nous assurer que, si on dit qu'on est francophone, on peut vivre en français dans cette province.

Avec ça, je demanderais le consentement unanime que l'Assemblée déclare que le drapeau franco-ontarien soit hissé pour 365 jours, pour tous les jours de l'année à l'Assemblée.

M^{me} Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier): C'est avec fierté et enthousiasme que je m'adresse à l'Assemblée législative en ce 24 juin, fête de la Saint-Jean-Baptiste, Fête nationale du Québec, mais d'abord et avant tout la fête de tous les Canadiens français d'un bout à l'autre de ce grand pays et, bien sûr, la fête des Franco-Ontariennes et Franco-Ontariens.

1420

Cette fête de tous les Canadiens français remonte au début de la colonisation du pays alors que les Français ont apporté au Canada la coutume de célébrer le soleil de l'été le 24 juin. Puis en 1908, le pape Pie X a déclaré Saint-Jean-Baptiste comme patron de la nation canadienne-française. C'est avec fierté que nous voulons aujourd'hui célébrer cette fête avec tous les francophones du Canada.

Aujourd'hui, tous les francophones de l'Ontario, qu'ils habitent Toronto ou Ottawa, Thunder Bay, Sudbury ou Pointe-aux-Roches, des petits villages, des grandes

municipalités urbaines, oui, tous les Francos, célèbrent ensemble la fête de la Saint-Jean-Baptiste. Que ce soient des festivals, des parades, des concerts en plein air, des soupers de campagne, des rencontres de famille, le cœur est à la fête. Toutes ces activités donnent une saveur de grande fête et de retrouvailles à des milliers de Franco-Ontariennes et de Francô-Ontariens qui célèbrent avec fierté leur appartenance à la grande famille des Canadiens français.

Comme je suis fière de pouvoir me lever en Assemblée législative aujourd'hui et proclamer bien haut mon appartenance à cette grande communauté de Franco-Canadiens et Franco-Canadiennes, et plus particulièrement de Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes. Je suis fière de ma langue, fière de ma culture, fière de mon drapeau, reconnu comme emblème officiel de l'Ontario, ce drapeau que nous avons hissé ce midi devant l'édifice de l'Assemblée législative.

C'est bien en l'an 2001 que cette Assemblée législative a reconnu officiellement le drapeau franco-ontarien en signe de la reconnaissance officielle de la communauté francophone de l'Ontario et qu'il a été hissé pour la première fois à la vue de tous et de toutes. Toute la communauté francophone s'en réjouit.

Je suis aussi fière de reconnaître les 500 000 et plus de francophones que nous sommes en Ontario qui contribuent à faire de cette province une province forte aux points de vue social, culturel et économique.

Depuis les débuts de cette province, les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes ont contribué à la vitalité de notre province et ils continuent à y participer à part entière. De plus, des centaines de nouveaux arrivants parlant le français ont choisi l'Ontario comme leur patrie.

Nous célébrons aujourd'hui et je m'en réjouis. Nous célébrons notre fête, notre drapeau, notre francophonie, quoi. Mais j'ose cependant répéter le vœu que j'ai déjà exprimé devant cette assemblée et que plusieurs de nous caressons depuis longtemps. Nous rêvons tous et toutes du jour où la pleine reconnaissance de notre communauté franco-ontarienne sera complète. Je parle du jour où nos droits seront officiellement reconnus dans la constitution canadienne. C'est ce que je désire de toutes mes énergies, de tout mon cœur.

Bonne Saint-Jean-Baptiste à tous les Canadiens et Canadiennes françaises. J'invite toute la population ontarienne à se joindre à nos activités.

The Speaker: The member for Timmins-James Bay on a point of order.

M. Bisson: Je demande le consentement unanime que le drapeau franco-ontarien soit hissé 365 jours à l'Assemblée.

The Speaker: The member has requested that the Franco-Ontario flag be flown in front of the Ontario Legislature for 365 days. Same point of order, Minister?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, Government House Leader): I'm certainly very excited about that idea and I look forward to discussing it with the member in the House leaders' meeting on Thursday.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I'm asking for unanimous consent to have second and third reading of Bill 39, An Act to restrict the operation of large hog farms and to amend the Nutrient Management Act, 2002.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Just before we continue, joining us in the Speaker's gallery today are four Ontarians, here to receive the internationally recognized medal of la francophonie, l'ordre de la Pléiade, for their outstanding contribution to French-speaking communities in the province. They are Liliane Beauchamp, Marcel Bourassa, Gilles LeVasseur and Pascal Sabourin. Please join me in welcoming our distinguished guests.

The member for Toronto-Danforth first on a point of order, and then I'll get to the other members.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): Mr Speaker, I ask for second and third readings of Bill 36, An Act to protect sources of drinking water in Ontario.

The Speaker: You're seeking unanimous consent?

Ms Churley: Unanimous consent.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I heard some noes.

Mr Gregory S. Sorbara (Vaughan-King-Aurora): On a point of order, Speaker: I want to take this opportunity to welcome the city of Brampton's budget chief, Councillor Linda Jeffrey, to the Legislature. She is here today checking out the operation of this place, and I want everyone to join me in welcoming her to the gallery.

Ms Churley: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I ask for unanimous consent to have third reading of Bill 16, An Act to amend the Vital Statistics Act and the Child and Family Services Act in respect of adoption disclosure.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

Ms Churley: On a different point of order, Speaker: I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome students from the Jones adult learning centre in my riding of Toronto-Danforth.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, Government House Leader): I move that one member from each party from the standing committee on public accounts be authorized to attend the 24th annual conference of the Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

ORAL QUESTIONS

SARS

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My first questions today are for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. On the matter of securing SARS relief funding from the federal government, I think Ontarians have come to the conclusion there has been a lot of finger pointing, name-calling and blame-laying, with very poor results at the end of the day.

I have for you, Minister, a positive, constructive proposal. I will give the page here a copy of a motion that I tabled in this House yesterday. This motion would require, quite simply, that the House require the Provincial Auditor to conduct an assessment of the real and actual costs connected with SARS, now and anticipated, so we could then make a better case before the federal government.

I think this is a positive, constructive proposal. It's better than name-calling and blame-laying. Will you support this motion, Minister?

Hon David Young (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): For a very long period of time, many of us in this province have suspected that Mr McGuinty is nothing more than an apologist for the federal Liberals.

Today he comes forward in this Legislative Assembly, after having—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. I understand everybody is getting heated. The Minister of Municipal Affairs has the floor, please.

Hon Mr Young: For a very long period of time, many in this province, including many on this side of the Legislature, have suspected that you, sir, are nothing more than an apologist for the federal Liberals. Today, beyond any doubt, you have demonstrated that is so.

You, sir, have today called into question the integrity of the doctors, nurses and health care professionals across this province. You, sir, have taken—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The minister will get his time. We'll just wait.

We've lost the time, so we'll let the minister continue. Minister.

1430

Hon Mr Young: You, sir, Mr McGuinty, have called into question the credibility and the integrity of individuals like Dr James Young, who is an internationally respected health care professional. All of those individuals understand that this province has faced an extraordinary challenge over the last 100-plus days, and you are prepared to discard all that in the interests of supporting your federal cousins.

The federal Liberals have abandoned this province through this crisis, and you are nowhere to be seen. You are missing in action, just like you—

The Speaker: I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock.

Supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, you may measure success on behalf of the people of Ontario in terms of the number of names you call the federal government, in terms of the number of times you point the finger of blame, in terms of the number of times you engage in partisan rhetoric. We measure it in terms of how much money you're getting for our province, and you're not getting enough money for our province. You are failing miserably when it comes to securing our justifiable funding here in the province of Ontario.

Here's the way we can strengthen our case before the federal government: rather than the federal government suggesting that you are highballing and you suggesting that the federal government is lowballing, why can't we get the Provincial Auditor to weigh in, to conduct a careful review, tell us exactly what the costs are and then let's present that case to the federal government? Why won't you support that motion?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Just before we begin, I usually warn people. I'm not going to warn people. Everybody is warned. I'm going to start throwing people out. I'm going to throw you out in groups. We're not going to continue yelling and screaming across. Be forewarned, there's going to be no more warning. I'm going to pick two and three out at a time, and if there's nobody left here, so be it.

Both sides can ask and answer the questions. You've got a minister and the leader of the official opposition that the people want to hear who can answer very well for both sides and ask the questions. If there's any more noise where I have to stand up again, I'm not going to do it. We've got three days left. I'm not going to stand up here and get in between you guys when you're yelling and screaming names across from each other. I'm not going to do it; I'm going to toss you out. We're almost at 50. If we go over 50 as my record as Speaker, so be it.

Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon Mr Young: The only two people in this country who don't believe that SARS is a billion-dollar, life-and-death issue are John McCallum and Dalton McGuinty.

On not one, not two, not three, not four, not five, not six occasions, but seven occasions, we presented the federal government with proof that this issue was costing the people of this province over a billion dollars, but more importantly, we have lost 38 of our friends, neighbours and relatives to this deadly killer. Over 30,000 people have been quarantined, and yet you aren't prepared to stand up on behalf of the people of this province and agree with us that this is a disaster.

You of course see no hypocrisy in the fact that the same federal Liberal government was prepared to say that the ice storm in Quebec—

The Speaker: The minister's going to have to withdraw that, please.

Hon Mr Young: I withdraw the term "hypocrisy."

You see nothing wrong with the federal government that is prepared to flow hundreds of millions of dollars—

The Speaker: I'm afraid the minister's time is up as well.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, when it comes to securing our fair share of disaster relief, the approach that you are bringing is a disaster itself. We're not getting our fair share of funding. You're not prepared to go about it in a responsible manner on behalf of the people of Ontario.

You have failed us. You failed to ensure that our health care system had the necessary surge capacity in the first instance. You failed to flow the money to our hospitals and public health units in the aftermath of SARS. And now you tell us that addressing this issue, this disaster, is your single greatest priority, but on the other hand, you continue to maintain you're going to put \$3.2 billion into tax breaks for corporations.

Why can we not do something that is intelligent and responsible so that we can secure funding from the federal government? Let's put this out in the hands of an independent person, the Provincial Auditor, have him take a look at the numbers, have him make a genuine and real assessment, and then let's give that to the federal government. We will strengthen our case and we can then get our fair share from the federal government.

Hon Mr Young: To the leader of the provincial Liberal Party, this isn't really that complicated, sir. We want to be treated just as the people of Quebec were treated when they had the ice storm. We want to be treated in Ontario just the way the people of Manitoba were treated when they had the floods. We want to be treated just the way the community of Oka was treated when they had a crisis there. We want the disaster relief funding to apply to us. We are prepared to apply that principle, that template to our funding.

You know we have paid in excess of a billion dollars to support doctors and nurses and to support individuals through a compensation program. When you were asked by Minister Clement on numerous occasions to sign a letter in support of the people of Ontario, you were missing in action. You were nowhere to be seen.

Back on Friday, you put out a press release that agreed with me, I say with respect. You said the federal offer was woefully inadequate, which of course it was. It was a pittance. It was an insult. Then today you're standing up saying, "Why aren't we accepting it? Why aren't we taking their reasonable offer?" You have to be consistent. This is too important to play politics with.

I say to you, Mr McGuinty and all the Liberals, come join with us, come act on behalf of the people of this province. We are getting—

The Speaker: I'm afraid the minister's time is up. New question.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My next questions are for the Minister of Energy. Today, we've had it confirmed that the Bruce A nuclear reactor

will not be operational by the end of June, as originally anticipated. That means another 750 megawatts of power will not be available to us, will not be on the grid. This bad news follows on the heels of yet more delays in restarting the Pickering A nuclear reactors; and the portable emergency generators, which you so warmly embrace, will now not be operating until July.

We now find ourselves in the midst of our very first heat wave. The Premier himself has said that the grid is being put to the test. With the risk of blackouts and brownouts being very real for the first time in the history of this province, can you tell us why your Web site doesn't give consumers a single tip on how to conserve electricity?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, Government House Leader): We believe that conservation is an important strategy in Ontario. We've come forward with some substantial initiatives to promote conservation. We've had more than 50,000 people apply through our appliance rebate program to have energy-efficient appliances, which can do a lot to reduce demand. That's good for our electricity system, it's good for the environment and it's good for the pocketbook.

We've announced that we'll be forming a task force on conservation and new supply. That will be coming very shortly, which I think will provide more good news to the people of Ontario. We think that's important. We're bringing a substantial amount of new, clean green energy on to the grid. Since last summer, we've increased that by 500 megawatts with a new plant that's opened in Sarnia. We've increased that with 800 megawatts of new, clean non-emission power from Bruce. That's good news to the people of Ontario. That's not enough. We're going to continue to work on having more conservation initiatives and more green energy.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, I wonder if you understand just how very real the crisis is that we're facing. There's a very real possibility, according to the Premier himself, that we're going to run short of power. You yourself cannot guarantee us that we're not going to run short of power.

When it comes to patting yourself on the back, you've spent \$250 million on partisan political, self-promotional government advertising. You've got brochures for everything that are coming to our doorsteps on a regular basis. Why is it there is not a single tip available on the Web site? As a result of the mess you've put us in, we're going to have to harness the goodwill and interest of the people of Ontario when it comes to dealing with this crisis. We could do things like encouraging people to close their blinds; asking them to do their laundry early in the morning or later at night, turn off unnecessary appliances or defrost food in the fridge instead of in a microwave. These things sound small and petty in themselves, but if many of us do those kinds of things, if we do the equivalent in our businesses, we can reduce energy needs by 5% to 10%. And 10% is the equivalent of five nuclear reactors; 5% is the equivalent of two and a

half nuclear reactors. Why are you doing nothing to ask Ontarians to help us so we can work together to face this crisis?

1440

Hon Mr Baird: I take the issue of conservation very seriously. We've committed—and our action plan will be coming forward in the coming days—to move forward on a major public education campaign.

For the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Ottawa South, to stand in his place and give anyone lectures about self-serving advertising—this is the man who spent \$25,000 of the taxpayers' money at Bill Clinton's campaign school in Chicago. This is the leader who spent \$25,000 of taxpayers' money to try to have an image makeover. That is an outrage. That is a disgrace. He should pay the money back.

Mr McGuinty: Two words in reply to that: Gord Haugh. Maybe a third word: \$300,000. You may want to keep that in mind.

You may choose to whistle while you walk by this blackout and brownout graveyard, but I think you're being unfair to the people of Ontario. There's a very real possibility that we're going to run short of electricity this summer. I think it's important to be straight with the people of Ontario. I think it's important to enlist them in the cause of conserving energy. There is not a single tip to be found on your Web site that helps Ontarians better understand what they can do in their homes and in their businesses to reduce electricity demand in Ontario. You have had over \$250 million to pat yourself on the back when it comes to self-congratulatory ads and brochures that you distribute to our doorsteps. I ask you again, given that this crisis is so real and so serious, why is there not a single tip to be found on your Web site that would encourage Ontarians to reduce, in practical ways, their demand on electricity in Ontario?

Hon Mr Baird: As I've indicated to the Leader of the Opposition, we believe conservation is important. We've brought forward a range of tax incentives to encourage businesses to convert their equipment to energy-efficient electricity consumption. We think that's important. We brought in a program where more than 50,000 people in Ontario are turning to energy-efficient appliances. We think that's good news to the people of Ontario. We believe we can do more. We believe more can be done, and we'll be coming forward with a major initiative. I'm sure when we do, he'll complain that we're not spending enough with respect to promoting conservation. Whenever we do, he'll probably complain that we're spending too much on advertising.

NORTHLAND POWER

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Deputy Premier. Today, when your energy minister can't guarantee that there's enough hydroelectricity to keep the lights on, we've discovered that another private company that is supposed to provide temporary emergency power has a very cozy financial

relationship with the Conservative Party. Kingston CoGen is controlled by Northland Power, and Northland Power has conveniently contributed \$57,000 to the Conservative Party. This now brings the dirty donor list to \$175,000. So while Ontario citizens breathe polluted air and wait to see if the lights will stay on, the Conservative Party got \$175,000; your private power corporate friends got \$100 million, even though they're not producing electricity yet. People have to be concerned about whether the lights will stay on.

Deputy Premier, why did you put the Conservative Party and your private power corporate friends ahead of the health and safety of Ontario citizens?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I'm going to refer that to the Minister of Energy.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, Government House Leader): The RFP process that we followed was free from political interference. In his question, the member opposite brought forward no evidence to suggest otherwise. There's a reason for that: he doesn't have any. I believe the member for Kenora-Rainy River, the leader of the third party, to be an honourable person. I believe him to be someone of integrity. I find it regrettable, disappointing and quite frankly beneath the dignity of any member of this place to engage—and the member for Toronto-Danforth smiles when an issue of the integrity of all elected officials is in question. Those types of questions, that type of laugh and that type of smirk are regrettable.

I would like to be very clear: nothing that the honourable member has said—nothing—is true.

Mr Hampton: Minister, I suggest that you merely need to look at the documents. This is your request for proposals for temporary emergency power. What do we find on page 1? On page 1, it says that we need the power "commencing on or about June 1, 2003." Then we go over to page 7, and it mentions the earliest anticipated date for in-service capacity. That means being ready to provide power.

You paid \$100 million to these companies, and if you look at the list of companies, they contributed \$175,000 to the Conservative Party.

The people of Ontario are breathing dirty air because the coal-fired stations have to run full blast. The people of Ontario have to wait and see if the lights are going to stay on. I don't see where the people of Ontario benefited from this at all. They're not getting the power, they're breathing dirty air and they don't know if the lights are going to stay on, but the Conservative Party got \$175,000 from the same corporations that get \$100 million of public money but aren't producing any power.

I ask you the question again: why did you put the interests of the Conservative Party and your private power corporate friends ahead of the health and safety of Ontario citizens?

Hon Mr Baird: For the leader of the third party to stand in his place and suggest that any member of this

House on either side would put political interests ahead of the health and safety of any individual in the province of Ontario—I know the honourable leader of the third party doesn't believe that. I know he couldn't suggest that any honourable member of this House would suggest that. He's playing politics. Those type of tactics are sleazy gutter politics, and I want nothing to do with them.

Mr Hampton: Minister, let me remind you that there are hundreds of thousands of people across this province who have medical equipment where they need an assured supply of electricity. If the electricity isn't there, the medical equipment doesn't work and people's health and safety are at risk. It is that simple.

You had other alternatives. We suggested to you over two months ago that what you needed to do was to implement an across-the-province energy conservation and electricity efficiency program now. We suggested how you do it: offer low-interest loans so that you could get the energy-inefficient refrigerators out of people's homes, put in new ones that are energy-efficient and reduce the electricity consumption by over three quarters. You didn't do that. We suggested to you other energy efficiency moves you could put in place. You didn't do that.

What did you do? You gave your private power corporate friends \$100 million. They gave the Conservative Party \$175,000, and the people of Ontario don't have electricity.

Why did you put the interests of the Conservative Party and your private power friends ahead of the health and safety of Ontario residents?

Hon Mr Baird: I even notice that some of the members of his own caucus don't subscribe to that type of gutter politics.

We're taking a number of initiatives to clean Ontario's air. We're the first government that brought in vehicle emissions testing. Some 50% of our smog is caused by cars. If you had felt so strongly that that was important, you would have brought in vehicle emissions testing. This is the government that did that. If you felt so strongly about the plight of the people of the province of Ontario, why didn't you close any of the coal plants? You, sir, and your government did absolutely nothing.

Ernie Eves's government has continued the moratorium on new coal plants. He has committed to close Lakeview by 2005. He's one of the first leaders of a government anywhere in North America to commit to phase out coal. These are positive initiatives to clean our environment.

When the leader of the third party was in government, he did absolutely nothing.

PENSION PLANS

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): To the Minister of Finance—but let me say that we didn't have to run the coal-fired plants 80% or 90% of the time.

Minister of Finance, on several occasions, I have brought to your attention the tragic story of the collapse

of the Participating Co-operatives of Ontario Trusteed Pension Plan. The 2,300 former employees of Ontario farm and dairy co-operatives have been hit with a 50% reduction in their pension cheques. I also told you that other Ontario pension plans were in danger of precisely the same kind of collapse. The reason? Because the Financial Services Commission of Ontario is doing an inadequate job of regulating, and the pension benefits guarantee fund doesn't provide backup for all pensions. Now a second case has happened. The retired workers of Frost Fence in Hamilton have been told their pension has collapsed. Their pension cheques are being cut by 25% immediately.

Minister, you've got a serious pension problem on your hands in Ontario. How many pensions have to collapse before you do something to protect the pensioners and the pension plans?

1450

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): Yes, we are aware on this side of the House of the pressure that many pension plans are experiencing because of the investment climate. That's why the regulator has taken additional steps to work with those pension plans that may be facing difficulties, to try and take appropriate steps to protect pensioners. In this case, again, they are working with the company. They are working with the organization to see what can be done for these particular pensioners.

Mr Hampton: Yes, after the fact. After they get a letter that says, "Your pension cheque is now going to be cut by 20% or 25%," then you're there.

Minister, all of this has been predictable. A majority of Ontario pension plans now have an unfunded liability, and the pension benefits guarantee fund has holes in its coverage so wide you could drive several trucks through it. It only covers \$1,000 a month, in terms of pension guarantee. You've already had groups saying it should be increased to \$2,000. The people of Ontario assume that the Financial Services Commission is regulating their pensions, and doing it carefully. They assume that their pension fund is protected. But it's becoming increasingly clear that under your government, it's not being protected; an inadequate job of regulation is in fact being done.

As a sign of good faith, would you do one thing? Would you increase the monthly benefit backed up by the pension guarantee fund to \$2,000? Would you do just that?

Hon Mrs Ecker: This is the only province that has a pension benefit guarantee fund, so this is protection here in Ontario that is not available to pensioners in other provinces. Secondly, employers have an obligation to top up pensions. There is a requirement to make sure that those pensions remain solvent. There are many pension plans that are facing challenges. Running out and forcing them to make short-term changes that cause them to be at more risk is not the solution either.

The regulator has indeed been on the case. The honourable member's statement of the facts is simply not accurate. They are working with the plan to try and do

what can be done to assist pensioners. For example, as he mentioned in one of the other ones, half the pensioners who did have a problem are being taken care of. They are making arrangements to make sure that those people do have pensions, because it is important that when people put their money into pension plans they know it will be there, they know that they will have—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

AIR QUALITY

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Today in a scrum, when you were asked about smog, you said that coal-fired plants are only a small part of the problem. I recognize that you are new to your job, but surely you understand that the single greatest contributor to smog in the province is coal-fired generation; not only in Ontario, for that matter, but right across the country. You may know that Nanticoke is the single largest coal-fired generator in North America, and it puts out the equivalent of 3.5 million cars' worth of pollution every single year. Coal-fired generation is not a small part of the problem; it is the single biggest problem connected with the generation of smog in Ontario.

Minister, how can you dismiss the single largest polluter in Canada—one for which you yourself assumed responsibility for five years as Minister of Energy—as a small part of the problem when it comes to smog?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Minister of the Environment): All of Ontario's five coal-fired electricity generating plants—there's an agreement from the federal and provincial governments and environmental groups that they're responsible for about 8% of the smog problem in Ontario. About 50% of the smog comes from the United States. That's another figure that's agreed upon among groups and activists, and particularly in the GTA, where it's 50% of the problem. About 90% of the problem in southwestern Ontario comes from the 205 coal plants—and they're building more as we speak—in the Ontario-midwest US airshed. In our airshed, we have five; they have 205. When we get attacked by the United States about our air—and again, 90% of southwestern Ontario's smog comes from the United States—I don't see the honourable member saying anything about the US plants. He continually picks on our plants. He's got an unreasonable and, in fact, undoable promise to close the coal plants by 2007. There isn't enough natural gas in the province of Ontario today to replace those coal plants—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up. Supplementary?

Mr McGuinty: You're the Minister of the Environment. Coal-fired generation is something that cannot and should not be tolerated in our province. Charles Dickens wrote about the blight of coal in 19th-century London. In the 21st century, in a highly technologically developed Ontario, we're still burning coal. That air is making our

kids sick. As the minister whose responsibility it is to protect the environment, you have a responsibility to move as quickly as you can to shut those things down and replace them with a cleaner kind of energy. We've made a commitment to get that done by 2007 because we're not prepared to pay the price of doing nothing. We're not prepared to continue to allow Ontario kids to get sick as a result of breathing Ontario air.

I ask you again, when are you going to stand up, when are you going to admit that the single greatest contributor to smog in the province of Ontario is coal-fired generation? When are you going to do something about those plants in a very real and ambitious way to protect the interests of the health of Ontarians?

Hon Mr Wilson: When I was Minister of Energy, I moved to begin to put state-of-the-art scrubbers on our coal plants. Some \$200 million has been spent to date in doing that. That technology is almost completed. We are phasing out Lakeview in a common sense way by 2005.

But the honourable member has been getting away with murder, frankly, when it comes to his promise to close all coal plants by 2007. There's not enough natural gas in the province of Ontario. You would have to take the natural gas from the hospitals, from the nursing homes, from the residents. All the natural gas would be required to replace that energy being produced by those coal plants today. I don't see them building a new pipeline from either eastern or western Canada. I don't see any plans in the works to replace those coal-fired plants by 2007 with natural gas-fired plants.

Frankly, he's got to fess up to the people of Ontario. Your promise is undoable, it's unworkable and, frankly, it comes very close to the edge of not being completely honest with the people of Ontario. Where are you going to get the natural gas from? You and David Anderson have got some explaining to do to the people of Ontario, because your promise is undoable. We're working with Manitoba. We're working with other provinces. We're moving on alternative fuels.

MORTGAGE INTEREST DEDUCTIBILITY

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): My question is to the Minister of Finance. You have repeatedly stated that our government has cut taxes 225 times, which has helped to create more than one million net new jobs.

Interjection: How many?

Mr Gill: More than one million net new jobs.

What is your plan to help many homeowners in my riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale and homeowners across Ontario?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): One of the things that we recognize on this side of the House is that home ownership is a goal and a dream for many, many families. What we have done on this side of the House to try and assist individuals and more families to have home ownership is, for example, to bring in tax relief, like personal income tax relief. The average family is experi-

encing over \$2,500 worth of tax relief because of the tax cuts we've brought in. That has helped them do many things; home ownership is part of it.

Another proposal that we have to help homeowners in this province is to have them be able to deduct a portion of their mortgage interest—the mortgage interest deductibility plan. We know that on the other side of the House they don't believe in tax relief for homeowners; we on this side of the House understand the importance of that for families' dreams, and secondly for economic growth and job creation in this province.

1500

Mr Gill: The ownership of property, particularly a home, is truly a Canadian dream, yet some in our society are saying we should not encourage home ownership through the proposed mortgage interest deductibility. Minister, can you tell us who will benefit most from this important tax reduction?

Hon Mrs Ecker: As the honourable member knows, there is a cap on this so that those with the most expensive homes will not be receiving more of the benefit. The goal of mortgage interest deductibility, which we are putting forward for families, for homeowners in this province, is to assist homeowners to do what we know is best for their family and best for the economy. Again, we know the Liberals on the other side of the House do not agree with that. We also know that their record is to increase taxes on families. They increased personal income tax some three times; they increased sales tax. We understand that tax relief helps promote jobs, promote growth and promote benefits for Ontario families. That's our record; that's our commitment to Ontario families.

FISCAL AND ECONOMIC POLICY

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Minister of Finance. I would say your fiscal plan is unravelling, whether you want to admit it or not. We're heading for at least a \$2-billion deficit in the province of Ontario, and you continue to make promises you can't keep. I would just say to the people of Ontario: expect this. It was just last year, a year ago, that the minister had to get up and cancel \$1.5 billion in tax cuts and break the Taxpayer Protection Act. You have a phony budget, Minister.

I will say this: you say we're wrong; we say we're right. The way to solve this is to ask a credible, independent third party to look at the finances and give us an opinion. Will you do this? Will you do what other governments have done? Will you ask an existing advisory group, consisting of the chief economists of the banks and major private sector economists, to look at the numbers and give us an independent, credible analysis of whether or not we're heading for what we think is a \$2-billion deficit in the province of Ontario?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): The record speaks for itself: five balanced budgets, \$5 billion in debt repayment. What did the record show on that side of the House? A 33% increase in the provincial debt, tax in-

creases that take income away from our families and kill jobs. The record is very clear.

Mr Phillips: The record speaks for itself. You have in this budget \$2.2 billion of asset sales. You won't tell us a single thing you're going to sell—not credible. You've got \$800 million of savings in the budget. After eight years you've been around here, you've got \$800 million of savings; you won't tell us a single thing it is. You've got \$770 million that's only available if the federal government runs a \$6-billion surplus. I say this to you again, Minister: the province of Ontario is entitled to an independent look at your phony budget. It seems very clear to me and very simple: will you agree to allow an existing advisory group, consisting of the chief economists of the major banks in this country and the major economic forecasters, to look at your numbers and give us an independent look at those numbers, and will you do it, importantly, before you call the election, so we don't end up with an enormous surprise after the election?

Hon Mrs Ecker: The only phoniness in this House is the phoniness of the promises that are coming across the way. Under their promises, the taxpayers' federation says there will be \$4 billion of tax increases—\$4 billion of tax increases. If that's what they think the economy needs at this time, when we're wrestling with the challenge of SARS, they should say so. We on this side of the House understand that tax relief creates jobs, one million new jobs—225 tax cuts that they have voted against and continue to vote against, every single one. Their record is clear: deficits, taxes, lower jobs, lower family incomes, not the kind of record that in the last eight years this side of the House has created for the people of Ontario.

FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): My question is for the Minister of Public Safety and Security. The fire departments in Waterloo-Wellington provide essential emergency services. Most of them are in small communities, ably served by volunteers, and they continue to deserve the full support of this Legislature.

I've been contacted by fire departments in my riding in the townships of Wellesley and Wilmot that are aware of the 2003 provincial budget funding commitment for municipal fire services in small and rural communities. Will the minister please inform the House what is happening with this funding commitment and what kinds of fire service needs and projects will be eligible for funding under this new initiative?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Public Safety and Security): I thank the honourable member for the question and for his dedication to the volunteer firefighters of this province. Our government recognizes, supports and values the hard work of Ontario firefighters. This is why the government has promised the allocation of \$40 million to assist small town and rural fire services to purchase the new and updated firefighting equipment they need. At the present time, the Ontario fire marshal's office is working with other ministry staff, including the

Ministry of Finance, to develop funding criteria and administrative processes, and we hope to bring these forward within the next two to three months.

Mr Arnott: I want to thank the minister for that answer, and I appreciate the work he has done to recognize the importance of fire departments in small communities by helping to make them a priority in this past year's provincial budget. The minister has received a request from Mayor Doug Bergman of Wellesley township that outlines some of the equipment his fire department needs; this includes a new pumper truck and upgrades to rescue vans. He has also received a letter from Chief John Ritz of the township of Wilmot, asking how his township can improve their services through this initiative. I want to support them and the other fire departments in my riding in every way that I can. Ontario's firefighters risk their lives every day to keep the communities of Ontario safe. Can the minister tell this House what the government is doing to ensure that their efforts are not in vain and what initiatives the government is undertaking to assist local and rural fire services such as those that exist in my riding?

Hon Mr Runciman: I'd like to say that the government has demonstrated its commitment to the fire safety community in Ontario. It was this government that introduced the Fire Protection and Prevention Act in 1997, the first updating of that act in 50 years. We pledged \$3 million in funding in support of the enhancement of the Ontario Fire College and the creation of an emergency management centre of excellence. In addition to this, we've announced \$2.5 million in annual funding for generic and specialized fire training. Now we're working toward fulfilling our promise of \$40 million in additional funding. The government remains committed to ensuring that all emergency services in the province have the tools and resources they need to respond to and manage emergencies. Our actions are an indicator of this commitment.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Finance. For the past two weeks I have given you example after example of some of the outrageous rip-offs that private insurance industry providers have inflicted on Ontario drivers. I've also raised examples of individuals and families who are now paying far more for auto insurance here in Ontario than they would if they had a non-profit, public auto insurance system such as they have in British Columbia.

Yesterday you admitted that the auto insurance rates in that system in British Columbia were lower, but incredibly you tried to say it was because there was some kind of taxpayer subsidy. We checked with several knowledgeable sources, including the Consumers' Association of Canada. They all said the same thing: rates are much lower under BC's public, non-profit auto insurance system, and it has absolutely nothing to do with taxpayer subsidies, because there aren't any.

Minister, will you finally admit what the drivers of Ontario already know, that public auto insurance provides lower and more stable rates than Ontario's private system does?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): Maybe the honourable member would like to explain why it was that his former leader thought that taxpayers in this province shouldn't have to pay over \$1 billion to set up public auto insurance in this province. Maybe he might want to explain why his former leader didn't think it was appropriate for the taxpayers of Ontario to pay for a job loss of 13,000 with setting up public auto insurance in the province of Ontario. That's what his party and his former leader concluded after they studied the issue, after they looked at it very carefully. On this side of the House, we want solutions that are going to work for the benefit of consumers.

1510

Mr Hampton: To put it to you bluntly, the government at that time was concerned with the worst recession since the Great Depression. They were concerned with trying to make sure that some companies kept their head above water. That was the primary concern then. The problem you have is that drivers across Ontario are watching their auto insurance rates go up by over 40% over the last two years.

I know you and your Liberal friends are pretty cozy with the private auto insurance industry here in Ontario. But drivers deserve a break, and they know that in Saskatchewan, Manitoba and British Columbia rates have gone up by less than 10% over the last two years in those provinces. The drivers of Ontario want to know this: are you going to bring in a not-for-profit public auto insurance system, yes or no?

Hon Mrs Ecker: The honourable member is quite right that drivers in this province do need assistance. But what drivers in this province do not need is the kind of public auto insurance proposal that his party and his leader rejected.

Let me quote, just to refresh his memory. Bob Rae said, "We will not be proceeding with it for two very simple reasons: it will cost too much money; it will cost too many jobs."

On this side of the House, the policy decisions we make promote economic growth and promote jobs. That will continue to be the policy approach we take. And yes, we are working with all of the providers, the people and the groups within the auto insurance sector to come up with solutions that will work for consumers.

OHIP BUILDING IN KINGSTON

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): My question is to the Deputy Premier. A previous Conservative government built the OHIP building in Kingston at a cost of \$23 million. In the year 2000 it was appraised for \$19 million. It was sold in that year for \$12.3 million to a private owner. The private owner immediately mortgaged it for 110% of the value, which is somewhat

unusual. Besides, a lease was signed with OHIP by which the government will pay \$1.5 million for that building. A recent environmental and engineering study showed that the government now has to pay \$11 million in order to deal with the engineering and environmental deficiencies.

Minister, can you explain why the government would sell a building for \$12.3 million, retain a liability of \$11 million—in other words, sell it for absolutely nothing or next to nothing—and end up paying a lease for \$1.5 million? Why would you have sold that building in the first place when you got absolutely no value as a result of that sale taking place?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I do appreciate the question. I will certainly take the question under advisement and make sure that the Chair of Management Board provides the response.

Mr Gerretsen: I appreciate that, and hopefully the response will come before the end of the week.

I might just remind the minister that the Chair of Management Board at the time said, “We want to avoid the repair costs in the future and give ourselves more flexibility.” That’s directly from a Hansard of September 27, 2000, in a question that I put to him at that point in time.

Minister, why would you sell a building, retain the liabilities that go along with that building, and finally, after 10 years of complaints from the employees in that building—many of whom got cancer and some of whom died as a result thereof—retain that liability, so that, in effect, the building cost absolutely nothing or next to nothing? Why would you even get involved in that situation? To me, that shows absolute, total mismanagement of resources that the taxpayers of Ontario have worked so hard to provide you with.

Hon Mrs Witmer: As I mentioned, we will certainly take the questions under advisement and prepare an appropriate response.

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr John O’Toole (Durham): My question is to the Minister of Finance. I understand there are some 582 independent schools across Ontario that were eligible in 2002 for the equity in education tax credit. I might say, rather proudly, that there are, I believe, several such independent schools in my riding of Durham.

I understand that this tax credit provides flexibility in making the choices that parents need to make on that very important decision of where to send their children to school. Minister, could you please inform this House what action this government promises to those parents who want that choice of where to send their children to school?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): Again, our government believes in two things very firmly: (1) the importance of a strong, publicly funded education system; and (2) the importance of respecting parental choice. I know the Liberals believe that parental choice is fine, as

long as the parent makes a choice they agree with. On this side of the House, we think supporting parental choice is the right way to go, so we have brought in an equity-in-education tax credit, which will provide some assistance to those families who wish to choose an education for their child that may not be within the public education system.

In the meantime, we are continuing to make public and unprecedented investments in our public education system. For example, the 8% increase in public education that Dr Rozanski has recommended to us will make sure that with new investments and higher standards, our students are learning the way they should.

Mr O’Toole: Thank you very much for that rather comprehensive response. I know the province of Ontario wants to empower parents to make those choices. What really is confusing for me is this. The other day, I know Alvin Curling and Monte Kwinter clearly stood in contrast to their leader’s wishes and voted with the government. That’s understandable. They understand what choice is about for parents. Could you define for me—or is it an impossible task—the Liberal Party’s position on giving tax credits to parents who choose to—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): You will know I have said that you have to ask questions relating to the minister’s responsibility. Asking about another policy is not. We’re going to move on. I gave you the warning last time.

New question?

BSE

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): Minister of Agriculture, since the US has closed the border to Canadian ruminants and products, you’ve been aware that compensation would be in the works. Alberta farmers have their application packages. Their government has been on top of this since day one. Why don’t our farmers have their applications yet? Where are they, and what have you been doing? Last week I called on you to move immediately to get money into farmers’ hands and to enhance, extend or boost the program, as necessary, to do what it takes to save this industry in this province.

The program only allows for compensation of cattle slaughtered in Canada within 14 days. Where are we going to slaughter these cattle? We don’t have the hook space. We don’t even have a facility for Holstein steers and slaughter cows. The program inherently discriminates against auction markets, licensed dealers, future finishers and exporters. We need all those players bidding on cattle.

Minister, what are you doing to do to fix the very serious shortfall in the program and save Ontario’s beef industry?

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Agriculture and Food): I think the critic doesn’t really understand the program, so let me explain very clearly that this government was one of the first two governments to come out and say

they would match the 40% that was required by the federal government.

Once again, we're pretty much first out the door. Once again, we committed \$35 million to ensure that the agricultural community in this province was protected. Once again we worked with the Ontario Cattlemen's Association, a farm group, to make sure that we had a program that worked for the farm groups in Ontario. Both the Ontario Cattlemen's Association and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture have worked with us before and since we announced this program to ensure that we get it right for the agricultural community.

I think that the member opposite doesn't understand that we can't use a program that's designed in Alberta for Ontario farmers. That's why this government and this ministry has been working with the Ontario cattlemen and the Ontario federation to get—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

Mr Peters: Well, Minister, you just touched on one of the points. There are many stakeholders out there that have been left out of the process that's been embarked on. I wonder if you actually comprehend the magnitude of this industry. The questions are endless.

In my riding alone, three exporters of commercial and registered cattle easily represent a \$30-million economic impact. I've asked your office to set up a meeting with them, and I expect that you will meet with them. The dairy industry is heavily reliant on export, not only for breeder Heifers and replacement cows, but also for the slaughter of finished Holsteins and culled cows. Why hasn't the dairy sector been recognized for the importance within the cattle industry in this province?

1520

Marketing: no leadership in addressing competition issues or transparency in the marketplace. You must take a serious look at the drastic differences between the loss our producers are taking and what plants and retailers are receiving. The price drop is not reflected in those levels. Someone out there is making a killing. Do you have any plan for orderly marketing, should the border remain close? You need to stand in your place today and publicly shed some light on these issues in the days to come. This industry cannot be left in the dark.

Hon Mrs Johns: It's always easy to give to complaints; it's always more difficult to work with the farm groups to make sure we get the right program. Let me say that the eastern program will be different from the western provinces' program, and we're going to make sure it's right for our community. Right now we're working with the auction yards, because our system is very different. Our cattle go from the farm to the auction market in about 25%, and we have to make sure we have the right system there. We're also working with veal producers and other ruminant producers, because we need to make sure we have this program right.

I know he wants me to come out with a program without talking to my stakeholders. I'm just not going to do it, because I care too much about this industry. I'm

going to get it right before I ram it out the door and it's wrong and doesn't work for the industry. I'm here to protect them; maybe you're not.

CAPITAL TAX

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): I have a question for the Minister of Finance. As you know, I was in small business before I got elected in 1995. One of the greatest deterrents to my ability to invest and create jobs was the capital tax. This is a tax that must be paid year after year, whether or not a business makes a profit. Investors earn lower returns, and in the case of even larger businesses, many of these investors are pension funds, about which the NDP claims to have so much concern, and mutual funds. They earn lower rates of return on their investment for the risk they take. You have heard, I have heard, we have all heard from small and medium-sized businesses throughout this province that they need elimination—sudden if possible, but gradual if necessary—of the job-killing tax.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): I was enjoying the honourable member's comments very, very much. I didn't think I needed to add to them, but I will, now that I have the opportunity. We understand that the capital tax was a profit-insensitive tax. It was killing jobs and it was serving as a barrier to businesses to come and invest here.

Interjections.

Hon Mrs Ecker: We know—I hear some razzing from the other side of the House—that where they've increased taxes, where they've increased payroll taxes, they've killed jobs. What we're attempting to do is bring down taxes in every single budget. Every single budget has had additional tax relief. That's why we have one million more jobs. Every single tax cut we brought in, including the 10% first step on the capital tax that will come into effect January 1, 2004, they are voting against. This side of the House, jobs; that side of the House, kill jobs.

Mr Wettlaufer: As you're aware, most of our competing jurisdictions surrounding Ontario do not have a significant capital tax. This puts Ontario businesses at a particular competitive disadvantage. That tax makes it extremely difficult for small business to invest and provide jobs. There are many direct and spinoff economic benefits to be derived from elimination of the capital tax. Please spell out, from your discussions with these small and medium-sized businesses, just what those benefits are.

Hon Mrs Ecker: First of all, we have to start from the fundamental belief that if we want to attract and keep jobs here, a competitive tax system is how you do that. To keep those taxes down, we on this side of the House have provided \$16 billion of tax relief to individuals and businesses in this community. The capital tax reduction is another step in doing that. It will help attract more capital investment to Ontario to support innovation, productivity and economic growth.

The other side of the House has put out promises in the next election that independent organizations say are going to result in a \$4-billion tax increase. That's how you kill jobs in this province. We have the record that proves that you bring down taxes, you create jobs, you support additional economic growth. That's how you help families in this province.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-Baie James): Ma question est à la vice-première ministre. Vous savez que la convention collective des employés de la fonction publique de l'Ontario existe seulement en anglais. Le syndicat a demandé l'an dernier au Secrétariat du Conseil de gestion de partager les coûts de la traduction en français de la convention collective, mais le ministre a refusé. Le syndicat est prêt à négocier pour la prochaine convention collective une telle entente pour payer leurs frais. Est-ce que vous êtes—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order; if I could interrupt. What we'll do is we'll stop the clock for the member. It's my recollection that he's at 2:05, which should allow for a question and supplementary. The minister had trouble with her earphone, and in fairness to her—is it working now? OK. I'm sorry. I saw the minister going for it. I apologize. We'll allow the time. I thought it was for the Deputy Premier. The member can ask the question.

M. Bisson: Cette fois-ci, on espère que ça marche. La convention collective des employés de la fonction publique de l'Ontario, comme vous le savez, existe seulement en anglais. Le Syndicat des employés de la fonction publique de l'Ontario, SEFPO, voudrait que le document soit traduit en français. Le syndicat a demandé l'an dernier au Secrétariat du Conseil de gestion de partager les coûts de la traduction en français de la convention collective, mais le ministre a refusé. Le syndicat est prêt à assumer tous les frais de traduction—je dis tous—sauf que la version en français de la convention collective ne serait pas officiellement applicable sans la participation de l'employeur. La question est bien simple : êtes-vous prête à accepter, dans les prochaines éditions du contrat, que la convention collective soit traduite en français et acceptée par le gouvernement ?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I'm going to refer that to the minister of francophone affairs.

L'hon John R. Baird (ministre de l'Énergie, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones, leader parlementaire du gouvernement): L'une de mes responsabilités comme ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones est de prier les traducteurs d'entendre mon français.

L'une de mes grandes responsabilités comme ministre des Affaires francophones est de sensibiliser mes collègues aux besoins de la communauté francophone. Je suis très fier de faire cela. Je suis bien prêt, comme je l'étais toujours, à travailler avec le député de Timmins-

James Bay sur ce sujet et à parler avec mes collègues dans le Conseil des ministres. Bien sûr, avec un nouveau contrat il y a toujours une opportunité d'avoir des négociations avec les deux parties. Je suis bien prêt à parler de ce sujet très important avec mon cher collègue.

M. Bisson: Si j'ai bien compris votre réponse, c'est que vous vous êtes engagé à vous assurer que, dans les prochaines négociations provinciales, le gouvernement va accepter que la traduction soit faite du document de la convention collective—si j'ai bien compris—et qu'on puisse s'attendre à ce que cela va être fait à la prochaine négociation. Ma question est bien simple : est-ce qu'on peut s'attendre à ce que la convention collective de SEFPO va être disponible en français après les prochaines négociations, oui ou non ?

L'hon. M. Baird: Je suis bien heureux de travailler avec le député, le porte-parole pour les Affaires francophones du Parti néo-démocratique, sur cette politique. Je suis bien conscient des besoins des francophones. Je vais parler avec mon collègue le chef du Conseil de gestion à ce sujet et je vais aussi parler avec vous quand il y aura des négociations. C'est bien sûr une bonne opportunité pour les deux parties et leurs négociateurs, pas dans l'Assemblée législative, d'avoir une négociation pour un nouveau contrat, mais je suis bien prêt à parler avec vous à ce sujet si vous pensez que c'est une priorité et un besoin de la communauté.

MEMBER FOR RENFREW-NIPISSING-PEMBROKE

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We are finished question period, I believe? Yes.

The member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke is retiring. As we know, he is not seeking re-election. I don't know when the election is, but I hope that someone who has served in this place for 28 years would be recognized by each of our caucuses before he does leave. I'm wondering, if today or tomorrow is his last day, whether that could be addressed by the House leaders. I think it would be most important to recognize that.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Yes. He's going to join me in my endeavours.

I'm sure the House leaders will get a chance to do that. The member is here to advise them where he will be over the next few days.

1530

VISITORS

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: It gives me great pleasure to welcome, in the members' gallery, advocate Mr Arun Walia; his wife, advocate Mrs Renu Walia; their friends Mr Gulab Saini and Mrs Savita Saini; and their young daughter Miss Prateek Saini. I would like to have the House recognize them, please.

PETITIONS

BENEFITS FOR RETIRED WORKERS

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): I present this petition on behalf of OPSEU.

"Whereas in an era of growing health care privatization and care for profit, retired Ontario workers are entitled to live their senior years in dignity without fear of unaffordable health-related expenses; and

"Whereas following the 2002 OPSEU public service strike the Eves government exploited special cabinet powers to impose serious cuts to the medical benefits of its own retired employees; and

"Whereas these benefit rollbacks will force public service retirees to pay out more and more of their fixed incomes for costly prescription medications, dental services and other benefits; and

"Whereas the overwhelming majority of the affected retirees were front-line public service workers who spent their working lives providing care and protection for our communities;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Eves government must immediately reverse all the cuts to the Ontario public service retirees' benefits package which it imposed following the 2002 OPSEU strike."

I am proud to add my signature to this petition that's signed by hundreds of retired Ontario public servants.

TUITION FEES

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I have thousands of names of petitioners. They've sent me this petition to stop the cuts, freeze tuition fees and restore government funding. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from the Canadian Federation of Students, Local 24; the Ryerson Faculty Association; the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, Local 596; and the Canadian Union of Public Employees, Locals 233 and 3904.

"Whereas average tuition fees in Ontario continue to be the second-highest in Canada; and

"Whereas for every \$1 in increased tuition fees at Ryerson University, at least \$2 was cut from the university budget due to government underfunding; and

"Whereas user fees for a university degree have increased more than 135% over the past 10 years, more than six times faster than the 20.6% increase in inflation during the same period...; and

"Whereas Statistics Canada confirmed in a December 7, 2001, report that young people from low-income families are less than half as likely as those from wealthy families to participate in university education; and

"Whereas the provinces of Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador have all recognized that user fees are a barrier to accessibility and have accordingly frozen or reduced tuition fees;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and the Ryerson University board of governors to freeze tuition fees for all students and programs at their current levels; and restore government funding for all students at public universities and colleges in the province; and reduce tuition fees for all graduate, post-diploma and professional programs for which tuition fees have been deregulated since 1998."

I support this petition and sign it.

SENIORS' PROPERTY TAX CREDIT

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's my pleasure to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Whereas Ontario's senior citizens have devoted themselves to building Ontario's outstanding quality of life and have earned the right to a safe and secure retirement; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has introduced the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act, 2003; and

"Whereas" this act would ensure that eligible senior homeowners or renters "would receive property tax reimbursements on their principal residence starting July 1, 2003; and

"Whereas this would provide an average annual net savings of \$475 for over 945,000 seniors' households;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario enact the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act, 2003, to ensure that Ontario's seniors benefit from lower taxes on their homes."

I'm pleased to sign and support this on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham and present it to Ryan on this, one of his last days in the Legislature.

SERVICE DE DIALYSE

M^{me} Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier): J'ai une pétition à présenter à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario.

« Attendu que chacun a droit à l'éducation;

« Attendu que chacun a droit de se faire soigner;

« Attendu que chacun a droit à une qualité de vie;

« Attendu que chacun a droit à son indépendance;

« Attendu que Marie-Ève Chainey requiert les services quotidiens d'hémodialyse à la maison;

« Attendu qu'elle était candidate pour recevoir ces services sous peu;

« Attendu que le mercredi 29 mai 2003, faute de financement du gouvernement, le campus Riverside de l'hôpital d'Ottawa se voit dans l'impossibilité de lui offrir ce service important pour sa qualité de vie et la poursuite de ses études;

« Attendu que ce service coûterait moins cher à la province;

« Attendu que ce service permettrait à Marie-Ève d'avoir une meilleure qualité de vie, de se sentir mieux, de poursuivre ses études, de manger mieux et d'être plus indépendante;

« Nous, soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario la pétition suivante:

« Que le service quotidien d'hémodialyse à la maison soit disponible immédiatement à Marie-Ève Chainey et à tous ceux et celles qui vivent une situation semblable. »

Il me fait plaisir d'apposer ma signature à cette pétition.

HOME CARE

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas well-managed and adequately funded home health care is a growing need in our community; and

"Whereas the provincial government has frozen community care access centre budgets, which has meant dramatic cuts to service agency funding and services to vulnerable citizens, as well as shortened visits by front-line workers; and

"Whereas these dramatic cuts, combined with the increased complexity of care for those who do qualify for home care, has led to an impossible cost burden to home care agencies; and

"Whereas the wages and benefits received by home care workers employed by home care agencies are well below the wages and benefits of workers doing comparable jobs in institutional settings; and

"Whereas front-line staff are also required to subsidize the home care program in our community by being responsible for paying for their own gas and for vehicle maintenance; and

"Whereas other CCACs and CCAC-funded agencies across the province compensate their staff between 29 cents and 42.7 cents per kilometre; and

"Whereas CCAC-funded agency staff in our own community are paid 26 cents per kilometre, with driving time considered 'hours worked';

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To act now to increase funding to the CCAC of Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington in order for it to adequately fund service agencies so they can fairly compensate front-line workers."

I will affix my signature to this petition as I am in full agreement.

SOCIAL SERVICES FUNDING

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): At the request and on behalf of Hamilton Mayor Bob Wade and city council, I present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the province of Ontario should remove the funding of social services from the property tax base; and

"Whereas the province should agree to pool municipal social service costs across the GTA-Hamilton area if these costs are not removed from the property tax base; and

"Whereas the province should recognize that the city of Hamilton has been considered a partner in the GTA's urban transportation showcase program; and

"Whereas every city region named in this program except for the city of Hamilton is included in the GTA's social services pooling;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the provincial government remove the funding of social services from the property tax base and, failing that, that the provincial government include the city of Hamilton in the greater Toronto area social services pooling."

On behalf of my constituents in Hamilton West, I add my name to this petition in support.

1540

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas the province of Ontario has delayed the second phase of the equity in education tax credits for parents who choose to send their children to independent schools; and

"Whereas prior to the introduction of this tax credit, Ontario parents whose children attended independent schools faced the financial burden of paying taxes to an education system they did not use, plus tuition for the school of their choice; and

"Whereas the equity in education tax credits support parental choice in education and make independent schools more accessible to all Ontario families;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully request that the government of Ontario introduce the second phase of the tax credit forthwith and continue—without delay—the previously announced timetable for the introduction of the tax credit over five years."

INSURANCE RATES

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Progressive Conservative government of Ernie Eves has failed to protect Ontario consumers who are experiencing skyrocketing automotive, home and commercial insurance rates; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has failed to create the regulatory environment that would adequately protect loyal customers in a tough insurance marketplace; and

"Whereas the Harris-Eves government has twice introduced ineffective legislation which has done nothing

to stabilize insurance rates in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the average individual increase in auto insurance rates over the past four years have increased by over 40%; and

"Whereas the people of Ontario are having difficulty obtaining reasonable insurance coverage or are being dropped as customers—even in cases where there has been no change in their risk factors;

"Let it be resolved that the government of Ontario:

"(1) introduce effective legislation to ensure those injured in automobile collisions have fair and rapid access to appropriate medical-rehabilitation services;

"(2) reduce, then stabilize, auto insurance premiums in Ontario;

"(3) improve access to automobile insurance coverage through a more competitive marketplace."

I affix my signature to this petition.

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm pleased to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario today, which reads as follows:

"Whereas the province of Ontario has delayed the second phase of the equity in education tax credits for parents who choose to send their children to independent schools; and

"Whereas prior to the introduction of this tax credit, Ontario parents whose children attended independent schools faced the financial burden of paying taxes to an education system they did not use, plus tuition for the school of their choice; and

"Whereas the equity in education tax credits support parental choice in education and make independent schools more accessible to all Ontario families;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully request that the government of Ontario introduce the second phase of the tax credit forthwith and continue—without delay—the previously announced timetable for the introduction of the tax credit over five years."

HOG INDUSTRY

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): I have a petition from concerned citizens of the village of Dalkeith in the township of North Glengarry, where a mega-farm is to be built.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ernie Eves government passed Bill 81, the Nutrient Management Act, on June 26, 2002, and this bill received royal assent on June 27, 2002, without regulations to protect our environment as well as our aquifer and the safety and security of Ontarians; and

"Whereas the Eves government has not to date defined the criteria for mega-hog operations; and

"Whereas the environment in areas of Quebec, New Brunswick, USA and Europe has been negatively impacted by mega-hog operations in their area;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that an environmental assessment be done by a consultant recognized by the Ministry of the Environment of Ontario before a building permit can be issued by the municipality for a mega-hog farm operation in Ontario."

I gladly sign my name to this petition.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Health Canada approved Visudyne on June 1, 2000, as therapy for the treatment of the wet form of age-related macular degeneration; and

"Whereas clinical trials have demonstrated that this treatment safely and effectively stabilizes vision loss in 67% of patients and improves visual acuity in 13% of patients; and

"Whereas patients requiring therapy using Visudyne face a cost of \$1,750 for the drug and \$750 for the clinician procedural fees each time therapy is administered, and to complete a full therapy cycle, a patient would be required to pay \$15,000 to preserve his or her sight; and

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health in May 2002 announced Visudyne funding criteria that is not retroactive to June 1, 2000 and effectively excludes 80% to 90% of all eligible patients who suffer from macular degeneration;

"Let it be resolved that the Ontario Ministry of Health immediately change its unfair restrictions on macular degeneration patients and reimburse those patients who have used their own financial resources to receive this vital treatment."

I have affixed my signature. I'm in complete agreement with the petition.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): This completes the time allocated for petitions.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THE RIGHT CHOICES ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LES BONS CHOIX (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 19, 2003, on the motion for second reading of Bill 41, An Act to implement Budget measures / Projet de loi 41, Loi mettant en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Today is likely the last day my colleague from Pembroke-Nipissing-Renfrew will sit in

this House. I believe we have unanimous consent for each caucus to spend five minutes to address Mr Conway on this very important day.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): I'll deal first with—

Mr Bisson: To that.

The Acting Speaker: To the point of order? The member for Timmins-James Bay.

Mr Bisson: I believe we have agreement that what we will do is, today we'll do one person for the Liberal caucus, on Wednesday we would do either the Tories or the New Democrats and on Thursday we would do the opposite. Each party will have an opportunity to send off their fine members like Mr Christopherson and others.

The Acting Speaker: I'm not exactly sure what we're agreeing to.

Mr Duncan: We are.

Mr Bisson: It's agreed.

The Acting Speaker: Oh, it's agreed. The member for St Catharines.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): The member for Pembroke-Nipissing-Renfrew of course very reluctantly has those of us in the House paying tribute to him as is his wont. Nevertheless I must say that our friend Margaret Marland, who has served a long time with him, would like to see us pay tribute to him, despite his reluctance to be feted in this particular fashion.

I want to simply say what a wonderful experience it has been to be in this House for 26 of the 28 years Mr Conway has been in the Legislature. He is an individual—and this is quite unusual for most because they don't have this opportunity—who's been able to, as Rudyard Kipling would have said, walk with kings and keep the common touch, because Sean Conway has had an opportunity to meet Premiers, Prime Ministers, people prominent in various levels of government and internationally, in the academic field and the cultural field and the sports field, but always feels most at home in the Ottawa Valley with the people he has represented over the years in the many hamlets and villages, towns and cities and rural areas of his riding.

It goes almost without saying that he is extremely eloquent and articulate in the presentations he has made in this Legislature, and on many occasions he has delivered impassioned speeches about subjects near and dear to his heart and those of his constituents.

1550

It is not often that a person elected in 1975 is still in a legislative body in the year 2003, but Sean Conway was elected out of university, without ever having what some might say is a real job, into this Legislature and immediately had an impact on its deliberations and on the people of the constituency then known as Renfrew North.

It is also noted that on many occasions—today may be the exception—people actually came into the Legislature, as they did, I can recall, when Stephen Lewis was in the House, to hear Sean Conway speak. Whether one agreed

or disagreed with the content of the speech, there is a knowledge of Ontario history and politics which is unsurpassed by any member of the House and Sean has always brought to the debates and deliberations of this House that kind of historic perspective that all of us wish we could bring to our deliberations and our arguments.

He has also had the responsibility to deal with some very tough issues. He has been on both the opposition side and the government side. In government, after Bill Davis announced that we would have separate school funding in the secondary schools of this province, the Minister of Education who actually had to bring the bill forward and proceed with it was Sean Conway, and that was a matter of great negotiations. But previous to that there were significant negotiations that took place between the New Democratic Party and the Liberal Party when an accord was reached to have a government stay in power a minimum of two years. One of the architects of that—I would say the central architect of bringing the two parties together on that occasion for the purposes of an agreement to govern—was none other than the member for Renfrew North at that time, Sean Conway.

He also had to be the government House leader in times of government, which is always difficult, not during the minority when it would be particularly difficult but certainly during a majority period of time. Anyone who has served in that capacity recognizes that it is a difficult challenge.

Sean Conway has always been an individual of principle. When some of us may stray to be more partisan than perhaps we should on many occasions, Sean Conway, in his speeches, has often been critical of governments of which he has been a part or all political parties, or complimentary of all political parties. I think again that kind of ecumenical approach has brought him the kind of respect that few in the field of politics are able to have.

He has been passionate. At one time I can recall—we're not here to recall a number of instances, but I recall a famous question he asked about the Walkerton inquiry—and there was some question at that time whether there would be an inquiry into the situation in Walkerton. Mr Conway stood in the House and in a very impassioned way made a plea to the government to proceed with a full public inquiry. Whether coincidental or not, it was shortly after that that the government announced that in fact there would be an inquiry.

So the House is losing an individual who brings much to its deliberations. He has seen changes that he himself is in the best position to talk about, but I know he has been concerned across this country, not simply in this Legislature, with the diminishing of the role of legislative bodies in various jurisdictions in this country and at the national level, and I'm sure he will continue to be vocal and forthright on that issue.

I suspect that those in the academic field will have access, particularly students in our universities—at least one of them somewhere in this province—to that tremendous knowledge that has been accumulated by

Sean Conway and the wisdom that he has gained through his experience in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. I suspect that in the news media we will see Sean Conway from time to time asked to comment objectively, as only he can, on matters related to politics in this province.

Whenever we lose a person who has served—and 28 years is a long period of time to serve and still be a relatively young person to be in this House. Twenty-eight years is a long time to serve. It means that the constituents he has represented have had faith in him. I have seen him at work in his riding in the Ottawa Valley, where he seems to know each and every person and relates well, whether it's the fiddling contest in Eganville, the Rotary picnic just up the street from the fiddling contest, or in any one of the many towns and villages and hamlets that he has mentioned during his many speeches in the Legislative Assembly.

I know that those of us in the Liberal caucus will miss very much the continued contribution that he has made over the years to our deliberations, to the ongoing history of this province and to the debates which are so important in discussing public issues. We wish Sean Conway the very best in his new vocation, his new occupation; I suspect we cannot say "in his retirement." The Legislative Assembly will be a lesser place as a result of his departure.

Mr Bisson: I am pleased, on behalf of the New Democratic Party of Ontario, to be able to take these few minutes in order to talk a little bit about the history of Sean and his time here in the Legislature. We all know him as Sean. There are a number of members who come through this place sometimes where we're a little bit more formal with each other in regard to relationships, but Mr Conway is certainly one of those members who has his political beliefs, believes in his political beliefs and the party that he serves but still commands the respect of all of the members of this assembly, and I would argue probably commands a fair amount of respect with most Ontarians for his even manner and the fairness with which he's tried to deal with things.

I have only been here for some 13 years now; I first came here in 1990.

Mr Gregory S. Sorbara (Vaughan-King-Aurora): It seems like 20 to me.

Mr Bisson: Seems like 20? Thanks a lot.

Anyway, I just say that when I first came here I was really taken aback by his ability to ask a question in the House and be razor-sharp in the way he would deliver the question and hit the mark right on. I remember sitting on the government side of the benches and thinking to myself, "Wow, that takes some ability to do that." As a new member back then—we all come in here and we all have role models; let's admit it. We don't talk about that, all of us—do we? But we come here and we aspire to be better people as we move on in the development of our understanding of how to do our jobs as MPPs. Sean is certainly one of the people I looked to in this assembly, as somebody you had to look at and learn something from when it comes to how you present yourself in the

Legislature and how you present yourself, I think, in the greater community of Ontario. From that particular point of view, I just want to say that it was not only the Liberal caucus I think who benefited from Mr Conway's time here in the Legislature, but I think all of us have learned something from watching Mr Conway in debates in this Legislature, how he performed at committees and did other things.

What a lot of us noticed as we watched the debates is that he always comes in with these big books. I don't know where he gets most of these books—I imagine he gets them from the legislative library—but some of the titles are not very well known to my reading, and I do a fair amount of reading of history. I've got to tell you, I'm a history buff. I love to read political history; I love to read history in general and biographies. He always would manage to come into the Legislature with some book that I hadn't read and with some quote where I thought, "Did he stay up all night researching that one quote that nobody else has heard so that he can be seen as being more deeply read than all of us?" I'm beginning to wonder, and I'm challenging Mr Conway on this. I need you to fess up. I've got to get you to fess up, Sean, as you leave this assembly, what it is that you did to come up with some of those quotes that, quite frankly, many of us haven't read. I would say that pretty well all of the members of the assembly do a fair amount of reading, because that is one of the passions I think it takes to be a good legislator. So I need you to fess up: where did you find them quotes; how did you come up with them? Did you have somebody on your research staff, or did you really do that yourself? I look forward to the answer.

The other thing I've got to say is that even in the most difficult debates—and this is an attribute that I think a lot of us should try to learn, because it's one that I've certainly remarked in Mr Conway and one I've tried to do myself, and that is, even in the most difficult of debates, when we're into a really partisan issue that we really feel strongly about, to keep your sense of humour. I remarked, as I sat here initially, in the first days that I was here in the Legislature, that it was far more effective for a member to keep that sense of humour. No matter how partisan the debate got—and at times, Mr Conway has been known to get a little bit excited or, as we say, over the top—he always managed at the end to keep a sense of humour and walk away from that debate, even though it might have been somewhat boisterous with respect to the members. I think one of the keys is that Mr Conway well understands that at the end of the day we first of all are all honourable members and should all respect each other, we should never take ourselves so seriously that we discount others, and we should keep our sense of humour. I think that's a very—

Mr Sorbara: You're not serious.

1600

Mr Bisson: I'm being heckled by the Liberal caucus about these nice things that I'm saying about Mr Conway. I can't believe it. You Liberals. Sean, I'm trying to defend you here, and they're trying to heckle me.

I think it's a lesson that most of us can learn.

I also think of some of the discussions I've had with Sean over the years. He would always come to me and say, "Did you drive down from your constituency this week?" I was always amazed because Mr Conway, unlike me, is unable to fly into Toronto every week when he comes into the assembly; far too often, he needs to drive. It's a fair jaunt to go back to his home community. He always had a little bit of a razz with me in regards to whether I had driven to the assembly. I think he's probably done far more driving than I have, because at least I have airplane service coming into the riding.

The other thing I want to say is that 28 years, Sean, as you well know, is a long time. To be elected in this assembly—I don't know how many elections it was.

Interjection: Seven.

Mr Bisson: To be elected by your constituents in seven consecutive elections says that you are doing something right.

I've watched Sean as he prepared for debate and got up in this House; he always tried to go back to what Tip O'Neill said about politics: at the end of the day, politics is local. Sean would come into the House, whenever we would see him speak, and talk about Mary who lives down the street and owns the bakery, or Sam who lives around the corner from so and so. He always tries to bring the debate back to somebody locally within the constituency. I think that attests to the fact that Sean understands his riding and has worked it well over the years. He knows his constituents and they obviously have a great respect for him and have re-elected him seven times.

So in the name of all of us here in the assembly, the New Democrats as well, we want to wish you well, Sean. We know this is not goodbye, this is just we'll see you later. It's not that you're going to come running back here, but we know that we're going to be running across you, because you still have quite a career ahead of you. You were elected here at a very early age and are leaving early enough to start up a second career. So we wish you well in that work. Who knows? There might be a fall session. We might do this all again this fall if the government doesn't call an election. I notice you're just about choking on that one. But you never know. If the polls don't change, Sean, we'll be seeing you in the fall. We wish you luck.

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): I'm going to share my time with Minister Runciman, who has served with Mr Conway, the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke for, I believe, 22 years. Of course, being much younger, I have only actually served with him for 18 years.

This indeed is a privilege for me. I was sort of panicking last week, thinking that Sean was going to skip out before we had an opportunity to recognize his 28 years in this place. So I took some licence last week and used a two-minute response to give my personal expression of how I feel about Sean Conway and his service in this place. To be elected at age 24 obviously in

itself is very unusual, and there have been very few members who have been elected at such a young age, and as has been said, he was re-elected seven times.

But to serve in this place with Sean Conway is a privilege I wish every member could have had, before his time, and after it, when he completes his service here. He is a unique member in how he prepares for his debates, his statements, and all the work that he does in this chamber, because, as I mentioned before, he is one of only a handful, in my experience in 18 years, who has this unique ability to get up and talk about things of historical fact that most of us haven't studied but are tremendously interested in, in the way that he presents them. I have said to him on a number of occasions that I hope he does take a teaching position in the greater Toronto area, if not with the University of Toronto, because although I recognize he's a Queen's boy, and I guess Wilfrid Laurier before that, I think it would be fantastic to be able to attend some classes at which he was the professor. I know they would be fun; I know they would be interesting.

I know that over the years some of the notes I've received across this floor of this chamber from the pages—I have kept some of the notes, by the way, Sean. I recall his humour was very well demonstrated one summer; I think we were actually sitting in early July. I had been to the hair salon and had an experimental dye job and I came in with this flaming red hair. Of course, I wasn't in the chamber more than but a few moments when the page came over with a note, and the note said, "Oh my, Mrs Marland"—he never has called me anything but "Mrs Marland"—"I didn't realize how early the fall colours were this year." That's only one of many notes.

I just want to read very briefly from the official biography here because, again, I believe it's Sean's use of words that is so fantastic. It talks about the fact that his grandfather, Thomas Patrick Murray, served as the Liberal MPP for South Renfrew also for 16 years starting in 1929. He introduced Sean to politics at countless church basement political meetings where, in Sean's words, "Politics was a combination of contact sports and morality play, muscular, entertaining and deeply relevant to the people in the community." Indeed, I say to my fellow colleagues in this chamber, this member has been everything to his community for 28 years.

I would add, to all of us who have been here with him, no matter which side of the House Sean Conway sat on, from my experience of sitting on both sides of the House also, he was always remarkable to listen to and to enjoy his oratory skills. I never experienced him being unfair or discourteous or rude and he always had the greatest respect for the institution of Parliament and the privilege that all of us have in being elected to serve.

On a personal basis, Sean, and on behalf of the PC government caucus, we wish you great happiness in your retirement from this place and your new career path, wherever that takes you. May God keep you healthy and successful in whatever you decide to do.

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Public Safety and Security): I want to start off by complimenting my colleague Mrs Marland for suggesting this. She is the epitome of class and dignity and she always rises to these kinds of occasions. It's good to have members in this place who recognize the importance of someone like Mr Conway's service in this place on this date of his departure.

I'm not accustomed to saying complimentary things about the members of the opposition, especially Liberals. It can come back to bite you. I once said something complimentary about the member from Hamilton and it showed up in his election pamphlet as an endorsement from a Conservative member. Since the member isn't running again, I know there's no risk attached to this.

1610

We've heard about his oratorical skills, and I think we would all agree that he has been an outstanding orator and always someone you would wish to listen to, although not necessarily enjoy. He could be and can be quite a partisan fellow.

I recall we shared the west lobby for five years. Of course, we were competing to replace the NDP government of the day, so tensions rose on occasion. I can remember one evening when Mr Conway was in fine fettle and using great oratorical flourishes, and I was so heated up that I came up to the House and took him on. I think it was the only occasion that we sort of went head to head in the House. I'm not sure if he remembers that occasion but I do.

I was trying to recall, in my going on 23 years here, other members of the assembly who have been as impressive. Certainly Mr Conway has this attraction to the history of this province, this place and the people who have represented various constituencies over the history of the province. That has given him, I think, great fuel to raise these issues and hark back to historical precedents and the service of many others. I think that has certainly added to his ability to have an impact in this place.

I was trying to think of people. There have been impressive speakers on both sides of the House and people who can speak at length—there's no question about that—and bore us all to tears. John Williams comes to mind. I apologize, John.

I think the only other fellow, and I only heard him speak in such a way on one occasion, was a former leader of your party, Stuart Smith. I came into the House to hear his last speech in the House, and it was truly impressive. It was the kind of speech that had an impact on you, sitting on this side of the House as a member of the Davis government at that time and listening to Stuart Smith, someone I liked, as well, as a member. I knew his heart was in the right place. He has gone on to serve his country in other ways.

I think things have changed since I came here 23 years ago. I think Mr Bradley and Mr Conway would agree. Some things are better, but in many respects, in terms of the business of the House, there has been a deterioration. I don't think we see the friendships across the aisles that

we used to see. I don't know why that is. I'm not really sure. I think the impact of television may be a contributing factor.

Mr Bisson: Rules of the House.

Hon Mr Runciman: The rules have been changed by all three parties. All three parties have restricted the abilities of members to do what they used to do in years gone by. I don't know if there is one contributing factor.

I think we've discouraged a lot of good people from coming to this place, and then from staying in this place, because of the changes that have occurred over the past 20 or so years. That is, indeed, regrettable.

I just want to say that this member has certainly served his constituency, his province, his country and this place well. I'm proud to have served with him. I hope he stays out of my riding in the upcoming period. He seems to be in my riding, showing up at Liberal events every time I turn around. But I know he has good friends in my riding. They share a passion for US college football.

As a member who has served 23 years with him, I want to compliment him on his service. He has much to be proud of. His family has much to be proud of in terms of his service. I wish him only the best for the years ahead.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I thank my colleagues for those too kind remarks. I really did plan to leave quietly today. I guess I said something to Margaret. I always get into trouble when I say things to Margaret that I should keep to myself.

Listen, it's very kind of you. I do expect this to be my last day. I've got an important day in the constituency tomorrow, and then, since eight months ago friends of mine and I planned a post-election trip to the Maritimes once their kids got out of school—I thought June 26 or 27 would be very safe. So it is with some regret that I will miss the last two days of this sitting. I'm fully expecting that someone will make a trip down to His Honour's quarters sometime later this summer or early this fall to cause writs for a general election sometime before we would normally return in the fall. That is my operating assumption.

At any rate, very kind words and too kind in some cases. I just want to say to my colleagues on both sides of the aisle that one of the things I will cherish as long as I live are the colleagues, and most especially the characters, I have met in this place over 28 years. I must say quite honestly, it is the characters. We've all had them.

When I was first elected, the now deceased but the endlessly colourful Edward Carson Sargent, for 20-some years, really the independent member from Bruce-Grey, was a character of the likes I don't ever expect to meet again in politics, certainly in this jurisdiction. There were Vernon Singer; Margaret Campbell; Pat Lawlor; Elie Martel, father of the member from Nickel Belt. John Rhodes and John Clement were two cabinet ministers in the Davis government, two characters who could have made a living as stand-up comics. I've never met funnier people. I say quite seriously—John Clement's stepson is now minister—John Clement and John Rhodes were cer-

tainly very, very interesting, endlessly funny people. I think it's stating the obvious. It may be a part of the political ego, I don't know, but certainly the characters and colleagues over the years, again on both sides of the aisle, are a very positive part of the legacy that I will take from this place.

Early in my public life, the late Jim Renwick, one of the truly distinguished people with whom I served, said to me—it was very early in my days here; Jim at that point was a front-bench member of the New Democrat caucus—"You know, young man, you should realize that there are good people in each of the caucuses, and a wise young person would get to know those men and women and do business with them." I never got better advice in my 28 years than I did from Jim that day.

I think of my constituents. It is true, I was elected literally upon—not my graduation from Queen's University, because I still had some work to do on my master's thesis which I happily completed shortly after my election in 1975. I often look back to the circumstances of my nomination and election in 1975 and think, will I ever be able to thank the really tolerant, patient people of, firstly, the North Renfrew Provincial Liberal Association, and then the general electorate which returned me to this place for the first time in September 1975? Talk about a leap of faith. That was it, in ways that words cannot convey today. To my riding association and certainly to my constituents, I have to say publicly, yet again, my genuine thanks not just for doing that then but for supporting me through good times and bad times. Certainly 1990 comes to mind as one time they were more patient and tolerant than they probably should have been.

I think again of people here. The member for Timmins-Cochrane said, "About the books, where did it come from?" Actually, there's a very simple answer. I say this seriously to friends on both sides of the aisle: it came from the library. I will say, Mr Speaker and Mr Clerk, that members of this Legislature are served better than they realize by that legislative library. To the extent I seem knowledgeable and literate, most of the credit goes to that wonderful staff at the library, to whom I want to say thank you one final time for all the good work they did to support me and all of us. No better resource do we have than that place.

In a sense, I would also say to young people, when your parents and teachers talk to you about the importance of homework and study, it is important. I don't want to get maudlin. But the library is a good place to go. They will make all of us look good. They made me look good on more than one occasion.

1620

I'm glad Mrs Marland is here today because I want to say to her, and through her to all of you as private members, it is an important job you've got. I've wanted to say this publicly—I don't know that I've said it publicly before, Margaret—but you go through your daily life as a constituency politician, and you think, what have I done? Well, Margaret did something—this is a very topical point to raise this week. I don't know if she ever

will get credit. I was in cabinet, a senior minister for the better part of five and a half years, and what Margaret Marland did to clean up TV Ontario about 15 years ago—I'll be no more specific than that—was something that successive cabinets were unable to do. She did it, as far as I could tell, on her own. The public good of this province was substantially and materially enhanced by her good work in that very particular matter, I say this week when the federal Privacy Commissioner is in the news. It is a reminder of the good work that individual members do, as private members and as members in cabinet.

I want to say again publicly that I've been both, and ministers have far more difficult jobs. I was a better member in opposition for the time I spent in government. But I want to say to those of you who have not been in cabinet, you should, every one of you, have that opportunity, because I was a much better, much more responsible member of the Legislature having been in government, if only because I understood something about the constraints of power.

Having said that, one of the evils of our current system, quite frankly, is that we have, as individual members of Parliament, somehow accepted the notion that we are inevitable nobodies if we cannot get to cabinet, and that is a serious mistake. I say, as I take my leave after nearly 30 years, I cannot imagine a better job than being a member of the Legislature. Yes, it is frustrating. Yes, we are sometimes not as appreciated as we might like, both here and at home, but it's a great job. I think I'm about to find out just how good a job it has been, because as someone indicated a while ago, this is the only job I've ever had.

But don't diminish and in any way discount the inherent value and importance of the job that you have won by very hard work at the nomination and at the general election. You have, by dint of our convention and constitution, very considerable powers as a member of Parliament. I am personally not as attracted to some of the new fads in how to improve the system because, quite frankly, I want to see—and I hope to live long enough to actually witness—a behaviour modification in members of Parliament on both sides of the Speaker's chair that indicates a willingness to use prudently and sensibly the powers vested in you, me, us as members of Parliament. It is a great job. It is a wonderful job in which we take very important issues—Mrs Marland made the comment about "in my part of the world." It is true; if you live in Renfrew county, the provincial government owns 40% of the land base—schools, highways, natural resources, health care and hospitals. The provincial government is really an important presence in your daily life. To be able to have an impact on how public policy is framed here and administered locally in those critical areas has been a wonderful education, an enormous opportunity and something I'm going to miss. To be able to say that in this room, where people like Mowat, Meredith, Whitney, Ferguson, Joliffe, Raney, Frost, McMurtry, Nixon and people like that met, that I had an opportunity to be part of that parade—boy, that's a great honour.

One of the reasons, in a sense, I was interested in both politics and history is that my grandfather, who was here during the tumultuous times of the 1930s, lived to be a very old man who enjoyed great health until he died nearly at his 102nd birthday. He would talk to me, and I would go to meetings with him. So people like Hepburn and Ferguson and that crowd were real and living memories. To the extent I have an interest in hydro, quite frankly, it comes from those great hydro stories of the 1930s and, dare I say it, some of the political scandals around Hydro in those times as well.

Enough said. I'm going to miss the place. I'm now learning that for the first time in my adult life I'm going to have to do some things for myself. I'm taking a computer course that's not going very well at all. I have to learn that I'm not going to have staff to do this and do that. Those of you who came here with a life experience and job experience can't appreciate just how mollycoddled I have been to have come directly out of graduate school to a place where someone pays you very well and provides you with the kind of supports we have.

To all of you, to my family for their forbearance, their tolerance and their patience—my 86-year-old father may in fact be watching this as I speak, although I hope he isn't, because it's too hot to be inside; maybe it isn't for him on a day like today—to my riding association and again especially to my constituents from Calabogie to Chalk River, from Combermere to Arnprior, thank you a thousand times over.

To all of you, both here today and those now departed from this place, thank you for the ride and thank you for the fellowship. I shall miss participating in the race, whenever it begins; this fall, I expect. But as just a regular taxpaying citizen of Ontario, Mr Bradley, I expect to be on the phone or writing letters to let you know how I feel about what you're not doing to look after my interests as I slowly move toward retirement.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, and thank you, colleagues.

The Acting Speaker: I might say, from my perspective, Mr Conway, it's a pleasure to be the occupant of this chair and be the last one to sit you down.

Interjection: He's been sat down by better men than you.

The Acting Speaker: I'm sure.

The member for Sarnia-Lambton.

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): Speaker, I ask for consent to use the remaining time in the leadoff.

The Acting Speaker: Is it agreed? Agreed.

Ms Di Cocco: First of all, I just want to add in this portion of my debate this afternoon on the budget that I certainly have appreciated and feel privileged to have known Mr Conway for a short time. At the same time, I want to add that there's a student who came to me, who was turned on to politics just two weeks ago, and he said to me that he had this professor by the name of Mr Conway. This young man is all gung-ho for politics, and I guess it was because of the advice or the encouragement Mr Conway gave him. I do want to say that.

I agree with the consensus here that this place is going to be a little bit poorer because Mr Conway's presence won't be here. His eloquence and depth and oratory skills gave a touch of class to this place, and I, as one of the newer members, will certainly miss him. I want to wish Mr Conway all the best as well. I'm sure many of us might call him now and again for advice as we move forward in our careers in the Legislature.

I want to talk about the bill at hand, the budget measures, on which I am finishing the leadoff. One of the aspects of this place that's probably the most important is maintaining—and I'll say this again—the integrity of why we have a precedent, a convention in this place of holding a budget speech in the House. That's something that Mr Conway certainly was extremely passionate about. He brought forward a motion which asked that the budget be read in this House because of his respect and his commitment to protecting our parliamentary traditions. It was one of the last things that he did in this session, which he did not expect to come back to. Everybody was expecting an election. Mr Conway certainly took on—as I believe he is called the dean of the Legislature—the responsibility to attempt to restore some of that dignity which was lost because the budget was presented outside of this House. I certainly hope that will never happen again, because I think we lose a great deal of dignity and also the whole notion of the spending of the people's money being presented to the people's representatives.

1630

I remember Mr Conway asked all of us to think—if this is OK with everyone, we then have to ask ourselves, why are we here? Why are we here as individual members if we are going to decide that it's OK to take parliamentary convention and move it outside the House?

As I move on to this topic, one of the issues that I think is important to address is the fact that a budget is about choices. This budget bill is about choices. I want to talk about some of the choices that have been made.

The Ontario government, under Premier Ernie Eves, made a number of choices, starting in March. They chose to provide to themselves spending power of \$36 billion. Of course, they also made the choice to present the budget speech in a car parts plant. It certainly saddens us, and it was probably one of those things one wishes to forget: that we actually presented the budget speech in a car parts plant.

A choice was made to again begin this conflict with teachers, with educators, because of the bill to ban teacher strikes and also to force what are considered voluntary commitments by educators outside the classroom, almost as if, "Well, we're going to incorporate this in what we expect educators to do."

There was a choice to bring in a funding formula. This is going back to 1998.

I want to talk a little bit about the consequences of those kinds of choices. Government has this important role, and this role assists in the shaping of our society,

and the commitment and the philosophy is mirrored by the budget priorities.

I want to talk about one of the issues that has come to the forefront more and more over the last two years in regard to education, and it deals with the public spaces that our schools provided.

I want to talk about the consequences of cash-starved school boards. Of course, one of those consequences brought about the Rozanski report. The Rozanski report did an analysis of what the issues and problems were. That report indicated that \$2-billion-plus was removed from the system and that it needed to be injected again.

I had an interesting meeting with a number of very, very good people from across this province who are called SPACE, Saving Public Access to Community Space Everywhere. What they are is a network of organizations that support affordable, accessible space for non-profit community programs that serve children, youth, adults and seniors in publicly funded facilities such as schools, libraries, recreation centres and municipal buildings.

I want to focus on the whole issue of the usage of school facilities. SPACE is alarmed at the number of community groups that are at risk due to new fees to use school facilities and playing fields. It is interesting, going back to a bit of history here, that in 1994, I believe it was, while promising not to raise taxes, the Minister of Finance of the day, Floyd Laughren, was trying to add some fees to Boy Scouts and Girl Guides. But they were nominal fees. The Tory leader at the time was Mike Harris. His comment about government changing some of the fees when they went to provincial parks was, "A fee hike is the same as a tax hike." That's what Mike Harris said then.

I say this because groups that are using school spaces today are seeing hikes in the cost of using those facilities. In Simcoe it has gone up from \$25 a child to \$400 a child if they want to play basketball. I heard the Minister of Finance say, "When we lower taxes in this province, it creates jobs," and that's the simplistic answer to everything. Yet we're seeing these fee hikes as a consequence of not having properly funded our public schools.

It's interesting. SPACE has done a great deal of research. It talks about the funding formula, but it also says what Premier Eves said. He said, "For many small communities, schools are not just places of learning but focal points of community life." SPACE believes this is true for all communities, regardless of their size. This coalition was formed as a way to deal with the inaccessibility of community space.

Dr Mordechai Rozanski said, "When community groups, parents and others visit the school to participate in community activities and use the school's facilities, they develop a sense of interest and ownership in local education. More public interest in and ownership of educational issues can only strengthen our education system."

Why do I bring this up? When we talk about budgets, budgets are a way to invest. They're to invest in people,

and there's supposed to be an outcome. What I found really interesting is that SPACE talked about the 12 reasons why these spaces are important. "Twelve Good Reasons to support affordable community access to school space." It's for a nominal fee, not these exorbitant hikes. You know, I talked to a representative of a Girls and Boys Club. They said that the space in schools now has gone up—they were able to use for a very nominal fee—to \$1,000 for two hours.

These groups will fold. The basketball teams that are run by volunteers will no longer work, or the programs will definitely fold. This is the "Twelve Good Reasons" to keep school space access available to community groups.

1640

It improves student performance. They talk about the school-based after-hours programs like Guides, Scouts, sports and recreation. It actually improves student performance.

It also encourages physical activity and healthy lifestyle development. That is part and parcel of prevention. We live such a sedentary lifestyle. Our children are more and more sedentary because of the lifestyle that we have. Yet what are we doing? Shutting down or choosing—the government is making choices that are having what I call a detrimental impact on our children in physical activity because not only have they cut the number of phys-ed teachers, they also don't encourage access to the schools, because of the exorbitant fees.

It also provides a cost-effective use of school space. I don't know how much extra it costs to keep a school open if you already have to heat the school. I mean, it's not as if a couple of hours at night is going to cost that much more. The school is functioning. It has to be cleaned anyway. So I don't understand why these prices are increasing as much as they have, while the government idly watches what takes place.

It also prevents crime, because there are activities—whether it's basketball, soccer, volleyball or Girls and Boys Clubs. These are groups where kids come together. It's part and parcel of our society looking after young people.

It also promotes—and I'll just do a couple more—community well-being. This what's interesting, because it actually fits with the government's policy direction, yet they don't act on it. They talk about how access to public space and school facilities helps to advance many of the objectives that the government says that it has. But they say it and just forget to do it. Again, it talks about health promotion, crime prevention and a sport action plan, which would certainly help if we had access to the schools.

I bring this out again because I believe that we're doing a great disservice to the province, to the children and to the people of Ontario, by not having our school spaces accessible, because I believe we've already paid for it with public dollars.

I want to go on and talk about the notion of the actual fiscal plan. I believe that the fiscal plan that the Ontario

government has presented to us is unravelling. I say that it's unravelling because this government is running a deficit. It's running a deficit, according to the TD economist. What they're doing is taking into consideration the sale of assets, but they won't say what they're selling. It's like saying that I'm going to budget my household expenses this year based on how much stuff I can sell. If I have a garage sale, then I can end up paying my bills. That's what they're saying.

I have with me a report by the economist of the TD Bank on the 2003 Ontario budget. It does an analysis. I want to take a look at one of the issues that's extremely important, and that's the federal transfers, and the fact that the federal transfers fill the hole in fiscal 2002-03. This is what this report says: "In the 2002 budget, the Ontario government had booked \$1.8 billion in net proceeds from the planned commercialization of assets." Although it was not identified per se, it says, "Hydro One, the transmission arm of the province's utility system was a likely candidate for privatization. Thus the government's announcement in January 2003 that it would not go ahead with the planned sale left a sizable hole in the books."

Then, this report goes on, "Fortunately for the government, however, help came in the way of a significant injection of federal transfers, notably an additional \$1 billion resulting from the February 2003 accord on health renewal and a \$500-million upward revision as a result of an adjustment to the prior year." It goes on to state, "Coming like manna from heaven, the substantial sum allowed the government to still book a small surplus of \$524 million in the fiscal year 2002-03."

What does this show us? This shows us that the government, according to the TD economist, has taken health dollars—transfers—and filled the hole of those assets that they didn't sell.

I believe that the government has a huge problem. The problem it has with its budget is the fact that the numbers just don't add up. I'm not the one who is saying this. People much better as economists than I am say this. What they have said—and I'll go through this. Again, it concerns me greatly, because fiscal accountability is about making sure that the priorities are there.

What we have is a hole in our education system that is forcing, if you want, less access for groups to our public system, to our schools, therefore hiking fees. Even according to Mike Harris, that's a tax on people, it's just not called a tax. It's called user fees. So those certainly go up.

The government is suggesting—and it's one of its sales points, I guess, with regard to what it's going to promote in the next election—that the education portion of the property tax for seniors is going to be rebated, a very onerous process because you have to apply for it. But that's going to add up to about \$450 million. Where are we going to get that extra money to put into education when we can't afford it?

Not only that, this is the same government that is charging about \$500 per senior if they go into long-term-

care facilities, extra money that it will cost people if they go into long-term care.

I believe it's important that we take a look at the actual fiscal accounting, the way these numbers add up. What does the Dominion Bond Rating Service say? They say that when adjusted for unrealistic assumptions, the budget for 2003-04 actually shows a deficit of \$1.9 billion.

What does the TD bank say? They found that the budget that was presented by the provincial Conservatives is hiding a real deficit of \$2 billion this year. Standard and Poor's, a credit rating agency, report that they have at least a \$1.2-billion deficit, and they criticize inflated asset sales numbers, as it is inconsistent with the stated objectives to take necessary steps to balance the budget.

1650

I am concerned that this budget really is off track. I say that because the Conservatives seem to consistently say, "Do you know what? We really manage our affairs well." That is not the case. The reality hasn't been that, and it's time that their budget is taken and looked at. I wish they would get an audit done of it so they could get an independent person to say, "Do you know what? Our budget is balanced."

By the way, I want you to know and I want the people of Ontario to know that the financial plan that was presented by Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals to the people of Ontario has had two economists and a forensic accountant take a look at our figures independently. It's never been done before. We are not any more into this era whereby you go out and buy your votes just before election time. That's old politics. The people of Ontario are smarter than that. It's time to move on. Let's take some sincere and credible approaches to what the issues are going to be and what the agenda is going to be of people who want to govern this province. No one has ever done that before, and we have.

David Hall is a principal of Vista Economics, an economic consulting firm. He served as economist and senior economist at the Bank of Montreal from 1994 to 1999. He specializes in government fiscal analysis. This is what he said: "I have been asked by your officials to prepare revenue and expenditure projections for the province of Ontario under the Ontario Liberal Party's proposed program. These projections are attached to this letter." He also says, "I believe that these projections are prudent and reasonable based on the best currently available information and economic forecasts." He signed his name to this. You have to have your numbers right before they will do that, because their personal, professional integrity is on the line.

There is also another one. I say this because I believe that the people of Ontario deserve credible analyses of these numbers that are consistently thrown out. There is a whole list of areas whereby the Conservatives have not even costed out what it is that they are doing in this budget.

We have John Marmer. He is a chartered accountant, a CGA and CFE. He is one of Canada's leading forensic accountants. This is what he said.

"Dear Sir:

"You asked me to review the estimated incremental cost of the proposals of the Ontario Liberal Party as set out in its platform.

"I conducted a detailed, line-by-line review with your staff. To do this, I spent about 70 hours. Their reports set out their best estimate of the incremental costs. I agree both with their methodology and the costs determined as a result of the application of that methodology. Any of the concerns I had are dealt with in their report." He goes on, and he signed his name on it as well.

Why am I bringing this up? I am bringing this up because of what happens before an election, unfortunately, and it has happened too many times in too many years by all parties. There is this notion that you have to go out and you have to promise people everything and anything that they want to hear.

We understand one thing. We cannot afford these tax cuts that the Conservatives are promising in their budget. They say that they are going to rebuild and help out with health care, they're going to put more money into education, they're going to put more money into the environment; they're going to do everything, plus give \$3 billion or \$4 billion worth of tax cuts. They can't. It's not possible, because the dollars just aren't there.

I looked at one of the papers, and in the business section—David Crane wrote this—it talked about the fact that we need to reinvent cities to compete. One of the areas this government has failed miserably in is the whole notion of looking at the habitat of our communities and how all the sections, such as education and our schools, and all the other sectors interconnect. They keep taking pieces out, and it unravels a lot of other things as we're trying to develop programs. This is what this writer talked about. This comes from a report that came out of the Task Force on Competitiveness, Productivity and Economic Progress; it's their last report. I think it's partly funded by the Ontario Ministry of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation.

This report says: "Results from this year's surveys clearly illustrate the flaws in Ontario's education policy—it is not based on coherent educational objectives, funding is insufficient and funding is not distributed fairly across this province."

It says here that only 32% of schools report a full- or part-time physical education teacher, despite the importance of physical education as an essential part of education. It also says that only 41% of schools report a full- or part-time music teacher, despite the importance of music, and only 10% of schools report a full-time librarian, while another 48% report a part-time librarian.

What does this mean? It means that the notion that this actually saves money is penny wise and pound foolish. The cost to our health care system, because of people's sedentary lifestyles, youth diabetes and all of this, is incredible. Yet here we are, cutting the programs and

cutting access to schools that are actually going to encourage healthy lifestyles. I say this because these are the choices—it is also a lack of vision, it's absolutely clear—in the budget and in the priorities this government has chosen in the budget.

We want to talk about affordable and responsible government and good government as well. When I say this, one of the things that astounds me most is that the whole notion of transparency and how government does its job and the development of good government is something that doesn't seem to be understood at all here. We have more secrecy. We had the electricity sector blanketed in 1997 by this cloak of secrecy. You cannot, even under freedom of information, access any of the bills or any of the information.

1700

We also have something else. There are public bodies in this province. I had a chance to present a private member's bill that actually passed second reading; I think it was by accident, because the Conservatives weren't all in the House. But nonetheless, it passed second reading and went to committee. This bill is about transparency. What it does—it's like an open meeting act; public bodies have to conduct their business in the open. Members of a public body who go in camera and make decisions behind closed doors inappropriately would be fined. There's no such law here, and yet the government voted against it.

The member from Kingston brought in a private member's bill to change the audit act. We needed to change the powers of the auditor so he could investigate and analyze the finances, let's say, of hospitals, colleges and universities or school boards, because right now there's no independent scrutiny of these bodies. Yet the government voted against it. This is important legislation that—

Interjection: They haven't voted against it, but they haven't called it.

Ms Di Cocco: They haven't called it; they're just sitting on it.

These are important pieces of legislation. Why? Because they improve the way we do business. That's what good government is. Good government isn't just about spin and spending millions of dollars trying to tell the public how great a job you're doing. Good government is about putting forward accurate numbers when it comes to your budget. All we have is the spin that this government has balanced its budget, when in fact it hasn't. We have a government that isn't committed to open access to the electricity industry—publicly owned Ontario Power Generation Inc—or to bringing forward better legislation to make sure that public bodies do their business in the open. It concerns me greatly, because in the end we're all here to make government work better.

This is the same government that put in a \$21-billion debt in the best economic times this province has ever seen. They brought it down a bit last year, but in 1995, you were at \$90 billion—that was the provincial debt—and today it's \$112 billion. The members across the way

don't like to hear that, but it's a 23% increase in the debt during the best economic times we've seen in this province.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I'm pleased to rise and commend the member for Sarnia-Lambton for outlining some of the major problems that I think not just opposition members but reasonable people would have with the budget of this government. Again, just to set the stage, the member spent a fair bit of time talking about the fact that there really isn't a balanced budget, and as the next speaker in rotation, I intend to make those same arguments and to underline the fact that for all your talk—you have a lot of power over there—you can't make something so just because you say it. The fact of the matter is that you do not have a balanced budget and, more importantly, the budget that's already gone by, where we can look at actual and not projected numbers, proves you didn't have a balanced budget last year either.

Interjections.

Mr Christopherson: They're starting to react now, Speaker. Let me get a guaranteed Pavlovian reaction here; it happens every time, and I have no doubt it will happen again.

Had Bob Rae been re-elected in 1995, the budget in the province of Ontario would have been balanced before the Tories balanced it.

I see at least one member going this way, and another going, "Sure, sure." It gets that same reaction. It's the truth.

The only difference—and it's a significant one—is that Bob Rae and the NDP did not include \$6 billion to pay for the tax cut. By leaving those revenues in place, we wouldn't have had to cut a single thing. Not that changes still shouldn't have been made, but you wouldn't have had to cut a dime if you didn't want to, and the budget still would have been balanced years before the Tories.

There are a lot of myths about Tory finances; balanced budgets has got to be the lead page.

Hon Doug Galt (Minister without Portfolio): It's just so wonderful to hear these two speakers. They've seen the light. After 10 lost years of spend, tax and borrow, stabbing the people of Ontario with their policies, now they've seen the light about balanced budgets and are concerned about debt. It's just absolutely wonderful.

I heard the member for Sarnia-Lambton whining on about the debt and what was going on. How did we get to good times in Ontario? It wasn't something that the federal government did; I can assure you that. It wasn't something that happened in the US. It wasn't something that happened in BC. I can tell you, if you look at what's happened—a lot of people say, "Oh, it was the good times in the US." No, the good times are not happening in the US. Just have a look, member for Sarnia-Lambton. That is not what's going on. It's been a direct relationship between the tax cuts stimulating the economy and en-

couraging jobs, and some \$16 billion more coming in in revenue. We balanced the budget for four years, and now we've introduced another balanced budget. Are we having some difficulties? Certainly we are. With the tremendous expense of SARS—not surprising. But will your federal cousins do anything about it? Oh, no. They came along with a quarter billion and think that's just wonderful and we should just trot right out and accept it. If they would give a little more than their pittance of 15% or 16% in health care, maybe Ontario would be in an awful lot better shape.

Back in 1977, it was a 50% share with the province. That dwindled down to something like 7% or 8%. It has finally worked its way up a little way. But I can tell you, with a reasonable sharing on health care, they would have to be paying another \$10 billion to get up to that 50%. Then Ontario would be having absolutely no problem supporting the costs of SARS today.

Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I am pleased to comment on the member's speech. I know she did a lot of research and had a lot of facts there, and I agree with what she said.

The other thing I want to say is that this government takes a lot of credit for balancing their budgets. Maybe they did, but I wasn't very happy at the way the last budget was handled. Having been here for 16 budgets, I looked forward to seeing my last one in the Legislature. And what did they do? Go off to an auto manufacturing plant. It was pretty discouraging.

They also talk about balancing their budget. If somebody else is paying your bills, it's easy to balance a budget. Download on the municipalities, especially on infrastructure. All this downloading is going to catch up with the government of the day, because somebody, some day, will have to pay for that. I'm talking about roads, streets, sewer and water systems and all the infrastructure. That's something that doesn't go away if you don't keep it up to date year after year. In the long term it costs you a lot of money.

A lot of the municipalities are not very happy now with what the government has introduced. Before they can raise municipal taxes, they're going to have to go to the government and the people before they get permission. Well, municipal governments have emergencies too. And if they have to raise taxes a little bit to pay for some problem they have that pops up from time to time with a road, a bridge, a culvert or some of those things that come up daily and weekly at municipal councils they like to make a decision and fix it the next day and not have to wait for government.

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Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I was listening intently to the comments from the member from Sarnia-Lambton. I thought there are a couple of things that need to be said.

She spoke about this one a little bit, but I'd like her to clarify and maybe just reflect on this a little bit, and that is in regard to the federal transfers to the province. We have a provincial government that's saying that the fed-

eral government is not stepping up with its share of what they need with the whole issue of SARS. They're saying that the federal government announced \$250 million last week. The provincial government is saying they don't want that because they believe it should be \$1 billion.

I would like the member to reflect back to what happened with the last over \$1 billion that the provincial government got in transfers from the federal government. If you remember, there was the federal-provincial health accord for 2002-03 where the federal government gave us just over \$1 billion, of which the provincial government only spent \$350 million and \$967 million went to paying for the tax cuts, and they wonder why the federal government is leery about coming forward and funding their full share of the SARS crisis? I don't like what the Liberals have done in Ottawa, but I understand it when they look at the provincial government and say, "The last time we gave you bozos over a billion dollars, you pocketed \$967 million directly in your pocket."

The other thing is, the member from across the way said, "Oh, well, you know, the American economy had nothing to do with the rebound of the Ontario economy." My God, let me see if I've got this straight. Mike Harris gives a tax cut and Bill Clinton gets the reward. Have you ever seen an interesting economic theory, that the province of Ontario gave a tax cut in 1995-96 and the American economy rebounded? They just did oodles of money in the American economy, and we benefited. What a silly argument. Of course it has a lot to do with the American economy. The quicker the government understands that, the better they'd be able to do their job.

The Acting Speaker: Response, the member for Sarnia-Lambton.

Ms Di Cocco: I thank the members from Hamilton West and Northumberland and Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh and Timmins-James Bay for their comments.

I have to state that this notion that if things went well, "The Conservative government did it all"; if things don't go well, "Well, there are these circumstances"—this notion about transfers: I agree that the federal government has to come to the table. But you know what? We need some clarity. According to the TD economist, those transfers were used to balance your budget last time because you didn't sell your assets. Do you know what? It's about trust. There is an uncertainty about trusting what you would do with the money or the numbers. I'd like to see the Provincial Auditor take a look at those numbers and say, "You know what? This is the money that the feds should give to the province on disaster relief."

Do you know something else? There's this whole notion that we have this debt that they don't want to talk about. Yes, the economy was hot, and it was hot because of the United States economy, but they added \$21 billion to the debt. Nobody should be doing that in good times. They spent a lot of money. Their numbers don't add up and they're running a deficit because I believe they are nearsighted in their approach to this province. The money

that they don't invest—such as \$6 billion in schools that are crumbling, that are not being taken care of, need to be looked after.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Christopherson: I appreciate the opportunity to join the debate. I apologize for the sound of my voice. I've a bit of a throat problem, but it's certainly not going to prevent me from making my points—maybe just not as loudly as usual, which I'm sure will come as a great relief for a lot of them on the other side of the House.

I mentioned earlier the fact that had Bob Rae been re-elected as Premier, he would have brought in a balanced budget years before Mike Harris did, and that's a reality. The numbers are there. The documents can be looked at by anyone who wants to challenge it. I've been raising it for eight years, and not one of them has ever attempted to challenge that as a fact. I'm going to assume that the best they can do is just try to avoid it and dodge it. Even now, they're not quite as outraged as they normally are when I suggest to them the possibility that somebody else, let alone the NDP, could be as—and in this case more—fiscally responsible than they were. Might I say that had that happened, a lot of the damage that's been done over the last eight years to the quality of life for an awful lot of people also wouldn't have happened. We need to take that into account as the public heads into the next election sometime in the next short while.

But it is also a fact that Standard and Poor's and DBRS are two examples of internationally renowned, respected credit rating agencies whose sole purpose is to make a determination on behalf of their clients as to the risks inherent in investments. In this case, we're talking about the purchase of Ontario bonds and how much of a risk that is, in terms of those who are investing what is usually hundreds of millions, if not billions, of dollars. Both of those agencies—and I invite any member of the government, again in the two-minute responses, to stand up and suggest that this is factually incorrect, that I am saying something that can be proven to be untrue—have declared that last year's budget was not in balance and that this year's proposed budget is not in balance. There's one specific reason, above others, that leads those credit rating agencies and the opposition to reach these conclusions.

Just before I make my next point, Speaker, I neglected to advise the House that I'll be sharing my time with my colleague from Timmins-James Bay.

That issue I referred to, the one thing, is one line item in the budget that ordinarily very few people look at. You can probably count on all your fingers and toes the number of people who would actually want to look up in a budget document, for all the volumes of paper produced, this one line item. That line item is sales and rentals, and it's in the revenue category. Under revenue, where the government would show how much money they're going to bring in through sales tax, other user fees, corporate taxes, things of the like, one of the lines in there is sales and rentals, again normally an obscure figure that really doesn't play any kind of significant role.

But in last year's budget, it had this huge number in there, huge. When you compare it to the year before—I'm going from memory now; I stand to be corrected—I believe it was in the neighbourhood of \$200 million or \$300 million, which is actually pretty close to what the actual was for last year. But it jumped from being a few hundred million to \$2.4 billion, with no explanation, just "Sales and Rentals." One would assume that of all the property the government of Ontario owns, it's not unusual that things would be rented, that things from time to time are sold, and that's what this line does: it gives somewhere in the accounting procedure for this to show.

Where it matters is that the number was so inflated from what it was the previous year that the obvious question of the government was, where are you going to get all that money? What are you going to sell to generate more than \$2 billion to make these books balance? Without a good explanation, for all we know, they tallied up all the revenue and tallied up all their expenditures and were shy about \$2 billion, so they just pumped up and inflated this one number so everything balances out nicely and they can make their proclamation, their proclamation that they have a balanced budget.

We suspected and accused the government of planning to sell Hydro One. If you sold Hydro One for around the figures that people were thinking about, it started to work. If you took that and put it in there and said, "Use that number," what does that do? That starts to fill the gap just about right, between what they had done the year before and this new inflated number. We all know what happened with that plan. Two unions took the government to court and said, "You don't have the legal right to do what you're doing." The judge agreed, and history has been written very differently than former Premier Harris ever imagined vis-à-vis Hydro One.

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That's why the international credit rating agencies were able to take a look at what was projected, which was \$2.4 billion, and the actual. Anyone who does accounting or balancing of budgets, particularly budgets of this nature, will know that the terms "projected" and "actual" are very significant and very straightforward. "Projected" is just what you think things are going to be. "Actual" is what happened, when all was said and done, in terms of the real numbers.

You didn't sell Hydro One, and guess what? They didn't generate \$2.4 billion. They only generated about \$350 million, which was, give or take, the usual number in the range of what you would normally see. You didn't sell Hydro One. You were planning to. That's where you were going to get the extra \$2 billion. You were \$2 billion short there. Through some other manoeuvring, some of which my friend from Timmins-James Bay has alluded to, in terms of federal money that you got—you either reallocated it or it was meant for a number of years and you took it all in one year, to show it as income for one year, to make up for the \$2 billion that wasn't there because you didn't sell Hydro One.

That is why Standard and Poor's and DBRS have said that last year's budget was not balanced. Their number, as to what they think the budget is out by, comes up pretty close to \$2 billion, which means the reality is that you ran a deficit of somewhere between \$1 billion and \$2 billion—not that that's a huge amount of money in the context of the budget we have in the province of Ontario. But it's not balanced, and you've made an awful lot of noise about it being balanced. It wasn't.

What's maddening is that many of them will still stand up and just pretend that that fact doesn't exist. They'll stand up and talk about this year's balanced budget. I forget what number they're bragging about. Somebody hold up a number for me. Is it four or five that you're bragging about this time?

Mr Bob Wood (London West): Five.

Mr Christopherson: They're saying, "Five balanced budgets." But the reality is they didn't have a balanced budget last year and they're not going to have a balanced budget this year. That's why a deficit of \$1 billion to \$2 billion is significant: because it does not reflect the reality. It doesn't reflect what you say it is.

Having spent eight years watching this government, I have no doubt that from now right through to the election, the only thing you're going to hear from a Tory incumbent or candidate is that they brought in five consecutive balanced budgets, even though the fact of the matter is it didn't happen.

Mr Wood: It did happen.

Mr Christopherson: I hear one of my friends across the way saying, "It did happen." You're going to have a two-minute opportunity, I would hope, although the clock—that would be a shame, if it ran out, because I really would like to hear what you would say in the face of what the international credit rating agencies say.

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Give him time now.

Mr Christopherson: No, I won't give him my time now.

Mr Wood: I'd just say they are wrong.

Mr Christopherson: Oh, they're wrong—of course. I forgot that one. I forgot about that one. That's always there in their vest. They pull that out whenever they're stuck: "They're wrong." It's always that the municipalities are wrong, the school boards are wrong, doctors are wrong, everybody's wrong. I completely forgot. How could I forget that argument? How could I forget that argument, that you never make mistakes and you're never wrong and that if you actually get caught in a corner where you're about to be found out, you always have, "They're wrong"?

Listen, I remember sitting over there not too far from where the Minister of Agriculture is currently sitting, and I can remember the leader of the third party, then Mike Harris, going on and on—putting me to shame actually in terms of going on—about the importance of what the international credit rating agencies said about us; that it was paramount, it was everything. But what I don't remember, I say to my friend from London West, is him

ever saying that they were incompetent or that they were wrong on a single fact that they talked about when they made reference to Ontario. Now, it serves your purpose to say they're wrong. Come along, come along. That is so lame for you to say they're wrong. That's like saying that all those who are criticizing the education system are wrong. You do that. You say that they're wrong. But the reality is that if you talk to the average citizen, their life experience in terms of their kids and their education is very different. Municipalities and public health units—it's always them.

The bottom line is that they do not have a balanced budget this year and they did not have a balanced budget last year. The reason they've put this figure in here, this \$2.2 billion, is that they're still hoping to make some major asset sales. The way things are shaping up, all they have to do is hold to this Houdini-like position, that somehow this unbalanced budget is actually balanced because the rest of the world is wrong, and then get through the election. Then this year's budget actuals will be after the election, and, as we say in politics, "That's a problem they'd like to be re-elected to have." The fact is—and it is a fact—they do not have a balanced budget. Quite frankly, shame on them for saying so.

I will say this: there is one tax measure in here that I actually support. It's a shame it's wrapped up in so many other things that are giveaways, just giveaways to your friends. I'm going to comment on that as time unfolds. But I do happen to believe that the 10% reduction in the capital tax and the ultimate elimination is actually a good move. If you take a look at what's happening in other jurisdictions, if you take a look at the principles of taxation, vis-à-vis corporate investment and business investment, I think it's fair to say that we needed to make a move in this regard—the feds have already done it—and this is one of those things that as a stand-alone item is actually a good move. It breaks my heart to admit that, but there you are. If I'm going to ask you to be completely forthright, then I'd better be myself. The fact is that I do think that one measure is correct. But that's pretty much it. I don't have a whole lot of faith or support in much else that's in this entire budget.

I've already condemned the government in another speech for what they did in terms of where they read the budget and what I think that means and its implications for this place and the people of Ontario.

This is the government that made a great deal of noise about the fact that because they cut taxes so severely from 1995 on, the revenue numbers went up. By cutting taxes—the proof was there in the budget actuals, if you look at the budget actuals after they made the cuts—the revenue numbers were up so significantly that the government claimed—

Interjections.

Mr Christopherson: I'm making your case. Heckle me when I'm attacking it, not when I'm making it at least. Think about it.

The fact of the matter is that they were maintaining that whenever they cut taxes it increases revenue because

that stimulates investment, investment creates jobs, jobs then create taxpayers, and therefore your revenues go up. I see all the learned economists in the Tory benches nodding in agreement, because of course this is the mantra. It's right beside the glass of Kool-Aid. There's a little card that says that: "Cut taxes; revenue goes up. Drink Kool-Aid."

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They were able to make the case. I have to tell you, it was just terribly, terribly frustrating on this side of the House for those four or five years when that was happening, because you did have the numbers. You had the numbers. We could argue all we wanted about why the numbers were the way they were; it's pretty hard to make that stick when it was so easy for you to just point to the actuals and say, "All of that's just theory and rhetoric. There are the numbers; there's the reality."

Fair enough. You can appreciate how frustrating that was on this side, but that's what you had going for you. I raise this not because I want to fill the government with all kinds of pride in terms of what they've accomplished for themselves over the years; I raise it because this is the same government that was so convinced that balanced budgets and cutting taxes were a guaranteed formula for success—again, because of all those arguments they had, and the actuals and everything else. Because they had all those arguments for it, they brought in the Taxpayer Protection Act, I believe is what they called it. What that said was that you couldn't raise taxes without going to the people, and you couldn't bring in an unbalanced budget.

What's interesting is that within a couple of years of that law being enacted—to great fanfare, by the way, because they made the argument, "Look what we did, and now we're going to pass this law so nobody can unravel the wonderful things that we've done. We've really got things fixed here in Ontario. Aren't we wonderful?" Of course, meanwhile our health care system was going into crisis, our education system was going into crisis, the ability of municipal government to provide the services that you were continuing to heap on them was going into crisis, but nonetheless, from this high, lofty perch, you were pontificating that the magic answer was in this bill that guaranteed no other government could come along and undo what you did.

Then the stock market on the NASDAQ side burst. Things were already starting to slow down. As that was starting to gain downward momentum, of course we had September 11, which was not, as some might like to lead people to believe, the main or only reason for the economic downturn that continued into the new millennium. But it played a role; no doubt about it.

The result of that was that your revenues were falling. There were losses that corporations were taking. There were jobs being lost—good jobs. Your revenue projections showed that the money you were expecting to receive because of this never-ending buoyant economy, led by the United States, stopped. It stopped, and you were in trouble. We had a new finance minister; we had a new Premier.

If you're in a situation as the government where you've got this balanced budget and you've got all these tax cuts doing all that investment stuff and the job creation stuff and things are just humming along wonderfully, if you run into this huge problem where you're going to have a revenue loss and you're not going to take in as much money as you were planning, it would seem to me that if you've got such a surefire formula for increasing revenues in the province, ie, cut taxes, what you would do is maybe double the amount of tax cuts that you had planned for that coming fiscal year. That way, you could make up for the revenue that wasn't coming in elsewhere, because of course this absolutely surefire, guaranteed formula for raising revenue was right there at hand. In fact, you had even entrenched in law that nobody could undo this, because it was definitely the end of history, at least the end of economic history.

So we waited for some announcement that would indicate that, sure enough, they were going to use the surefire, true-blue formula for raising more money. Instead, what did we see? We saw the Minister of Finance stand in her place and announce that all the tax cuts that had been planned for that year's budget were cancelled. Cancelled. Heresy, blasphemy. How could anybody on the government side stand up and say such things? Somebody had surely taken over the finance minister's body and was speaking words that were not hers and not those of the Tory brain trust. Something has to have gone seriously wrong here, because the minister said she had to cancel all the magical tax cuts that do all these great economic things—surefire, no matter what—because they couldn't afford it. Now, wait a minute. It's the opposition that has been arguing that a tax cut is a cost to the taxpayer no differently than an MRI; it's still an expenditure when you do the books.

The finance minister ran out of rhetoric, because they ran out of US economic steam. Don't forget, they told us they'd do all these magical things by themselves. They didn't need the US; they didn't need the Canadian federal government. All they needed was themselves; they did everything. It's amazing: they made an income tax cut here in Ontario and all of a sudden a worker down in Wisconsin felt comfortable buying a new car. That's how powerful they are.

Suddenly, all that was gone, and what we were left with was a minister standing up talking the language that most of us talk every day; that is, if you're not expecting to bring in as much money next year as you thought, then you're likely going to have to cut the money you were planning to spend or you're going to be in trouble.

The alternative, of course, would have been to run a deficit, which ultimately you did anyway. So, get this, you had to pass a law—I still find it amazing that you got away with this without headlines in every newspaper for weeks on end. I find it just so amazing, given all the things you folks have said in the past leading up to that moment. You had to pass a law that let you out of the Taxpayer Protection Act. Remember, that's the one I referred to that you put in place to guarantee that your

surefire magical formula for raising revenue in the province of Ontario could never again be changed by some wild-spending Liberal or New Democrat.

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): That's right.

Mr Christopherson: That's the one you had to bring in.

I don't remember your speech on that. I'll have to check Hansard. I don't think there were a lot of speeches on that. But it did happen; it really did.

There was a law brought in that let the government off the hook for the protections they said they put in there for the public. This is within two years—it might even have been just a year. But within two years, this is what happened: they had to use their majority to pass a law to let themselves out of their own legislation that they said they brought in to protect the public from all of us. It's mind-boggling, absolutely mind-boggling. That's what happened.

I still don't know how you got away with that one. I give you full marks for having done it; I do. As somebody leaving this place and not running again provincially, I've got no axe to grind. I just say I am amazed you got away with it. You never should have. You should have been finished right then and there, because you put so much—how many of you on the government side have in the Hansard speeches ad nauseam guaranteeing, "Tax cuts increase revenue"? How many of you? And yet there you were, being whipped by your chief whip to come in and vote yourselves out of the boondoggle that you created.

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It would be interesting, I say to anyone running against a Tory incumbent, to take a look at some of those speeches in the Hansards. I can remember sitting back, thinking, "I'm not so sure some of those people really know what they're talking about." But, boy, they had a great time with the flight of rhetoric, going on about the fact that tax cuts equal increased revenue over and over. Yet when it was time to prove it, when you didn't have the benefit of the US economy generating all that demand, which increased our demand for products and services, without that, you couldn't make it work. Check the Hansards, anyone who is interested, and you'll find that both opposition parties, certainly the NDP, were arguing that this formula is working—but not for the reasons you're saying. If the US economy ever stops, you're going to be looking for a seat, just like musical chairs. The music stops and you're going to want a seat and there won't be one, and there wasn't. You had the embarrassment—in fact, I think they did most of that debate in the evenings. Gee, why would you do that?

I want to move on to the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act, which I know the government members are going to be touting on the campaign trail. We've already seen some of the ads; they would be the ones with some of our American neighbours in them pretending to be Ontario neighbours. But aside from that, the ads are saying—I only saw one or two of them—

something like, "I want a government that thinks like me, at least the way I would think if I was Canadian." That was the way the ads went on and that's what the government is going to run on.

They're going to talk about their great passion in caring for seniors. They're going to make it sound like they're the first government that ever came along and thought, "If you want to help seniors, one way to do it that is entirely legitimate is to take a look at continuing costs in their lives in an area where you can reasonably state that they've paid their bit, and now we'll give them a little bit of relief, in particular to low- and modest-income people." You'd think they were the first ones that ever thought of that.

The law that's being amended here by Bill 41 is Bob Rae's law, brought in in 1992. It was the Ontario tax credit and it included benefits for seniors, not just in the education portion of their property tax but also sales tax. The significant difference was that it was a targeted benefit for low- and modest-income seniors, the thinking being that if you want to help seniors and you're going to spend some money, that money has to come from somewhere else—or you're going to have to raise a tax somewhere, but that money has to come from somewhere, and dollars are precious. "So let's target it so we can do the maximum amount and do the least amount of disruption to other existing services, or keep to a very small amount or not at all any kind of tax increase to pay for it," the biggest benefit being that you could put more money into those areas because it is targeted.

I don't recall, in the 11 years since, getting a single phone call from anybody saying, "Hey, I made a million dollars last year and I paid \$30,000 in property taxes. I want to get a bit of that back too. You gave it to the seniors." I didn't get that phone call. Maybe it went somewhere else; maybe it went to the Tories. Obviously at the end of the day it did, but I didn't get it.

People thought that was a reasonable approach, that it was progressive and that it helped a segment of our society that, quite frankly, everybody would like to help. And what have you done? First of all, you originally promised that you were going to give everybody a 10% reduction. You threw that out the window. You threw out the Ontario tax credit, and now you've brought in this Ontario Home Property Tax Relief For Seniors Act, but it's uncapped. That means that Frank Stronach, a guy who has so much power and influence in Ontario that the Premier took his budget to his place to read it out—I guess so Frank wouldn't have to spend the time and effort to come down here. Frank was lucky enough to have the Premier come and read the budget of Ontario at his place. And now, because this tax credit is uncapped, I believe the figure is—I stand to be corrected—about \$20,000 a year he'll get back because he's a senior and we all want to help seniors.

It's funny, though. Most of us are far more concerned about low-, moderate- and middle-income seniors, which is the reality for most people, one of those categories. Frank Stronach doesn't need any help from anybody in

this place, or anywhere else for that matter. We haven't even begun to talk about the corporate tax cuts that are going to benefit him, which he makes in the salary that he gets from Magna Corp. The personal tax cuts he benefits from are, I think, millions and millions of dollars. You wonder why Frank Stronach and others of that class—upper class, rich class, call it what you want. But you wonder why people in that world are quite prepared to support this government, no matter what. Because most of the no-matter-whats are the stuff that hurt us. The stuff that really matters to them is the numbers. Now how can you give Frank a little bit of help, the government would say to themselves. Here's 20 grand. Do you really think Frank Stronach needs 20 grand from the people who work at—

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: Do you think he needs 20 grand from the people of Hamilton who work at Stelco? This is obscene, it really is. The notion that you would do something more for seniors is a good one, and I think everyone would support that. But to allow somebody who lives in a multi-million dollar mansion with a multi million dollar annual income to receive tax credits for their property tax is obscene. There are far too many needs in this province for you to spend money in an area like that. And he's probably not the biggest example; there are probably others. I realize that if you add up all these individual people it doesn't amount to a huge amount of money in terms of the overall scheme of things, but that really isn't the point. We can have a great philosophical debate about the merits of a corporate tax cut that benefits Mr Stronach. We can have a philosophical debate about the merits of the personal income tax system, and I suspect that we could have a really good debate about that too. But I think it is absolutely indefensible that you bring in a program that has for a heading, "Ontario home property tax relief for seniors." Somebody like Frank Stronach will get back more than \$20,000 a year. He doesn't need tax relief.

Seniors living in poverty—there were studies in Hamilton and I'm sure they're in other communities too. You know how over the years there had been a marked improvement, and there was, and I give full credit to governments past here and at the federal level, which, over the last four, five or six decades have made it a priority to deal with the fact that in the 1940s and 1950s for a lot of people, far too many people, retirement was a sentence to poverty. There were horror stories coming out. Over the years, government has done things about that. We were really turning the corner on that. I'm not saying that all seniors were suddenly living in the lap of luxury, not by any stretch. There was still a lot of serious hurt out there. But it was a lot less than it had been, and the trend line was good. It was going in the right direction. It was showing more and more seniors rising comfortably above the poverty line. That's now changing again. There's a recent report from the social planning and research council in Hamilton that showed that the trend line is starting to turn the other way.

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If that was going to be your argument for eliminating our Ontario tax credit, fine. We all know the politics of things. Go for it. If you were going to do something to address that trend line that's now going the wrong way, I'd be saying some very different things here right now. Probably what I'd be doing is just ignoring the whole thing. That's usually what we do if you do something good: we ignore it; we talk about the things that are bad.

But to use seniors in this way—

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): Shameful.

Mr Christopherson: I think I hear my friend from Kingston and the Islands saying "shameful." It is. It's very shameful.

All you had to do to change this whole dynamic was cap it. I mean, even a cap of \$10,000, some thousands of dollars—most seniors, by your numbers, are going to get between \$400 and \$500 a year. A lot of seniors in Hamilton West will appreciate that. They can put that money to good use. Things are getting tough. But I've got to tell you, talk of the difference between a senior in my riding getting \$500 and what that means to them, versus \$20,000 every year for a multi-millionaire—the interesting thing is that the program they're eliminating is already capped. It already does that. They could've changed the name and put their own spin on it. They could have increased the amount and said, "We're doing so much more than the NDP did." They could do that if they want to. But at least keep it targeted so that there's consistency with the goal and the objective. The goal and objective was to increase the quality of life for seniors. Mr Stronach needs no help from Premier Eves or anybody else in government to improve his quality of life, thank you very much.

We still don't have all the money for education. I'm going to shift into another subject. Rozanski made it clear that upwards of \$2 billion was needed. I'll acknowledge you immediately announced—within a few days, I believe—\$670 million. What we were hoping to hear in this budget was that you were going to accept the criticisms and advice of Mr Rozanski and immediately move to bring the numbers up to par. Even as it is, with these numbers, if they're phased in, we're still going to fall behind, because they don't take into account the falling behind every year that's taking place right now.

The government doesn't listen too much to opposition members. I'd like to read into the record an article by David Crane, who will be familiar to a lot of people. He writes in the *Toronto Star*, but because the *Hamilton Spectator* is owned by them, it was run in the *Hamilton Spectator* today.

He makes reference to the Institute for Competitiveness and Prosperity. I know that ministers of the crown will be familiar with it, if not indeed the backbenchers, because you fund it. This is your agency, and it's headed up by Roger Martin, who's the dean of the Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto, just across the way here.

Hon Mr Runciman: He's a good guy.

Mr Christopherson: I hear the Honourable Mr Runciman saying "good guy." I'll bet he is. I would think he's probably a very smart guy too.

That report said this about the school system, in commenting on the fact that our primary and secondary education funding has fallen from sixth place in 1992-93 to 14th in 1998-99—the smart guy that Mr Runciman likes—this may be "a worrying signal that an important contributor to our competitiveness and prosperity, especially in our metro areas, is at some risk."

I live in a metro area, a lot of the members here do. Prosperity is supposed to be an priority for you. Certainly you talk a lot about competitiveness. We on the opposition benches have been making the argument for years that the benefit that we have competitively, by and large, in addition to our resources and the immediate access to those resources, is the value added that our workforce brings. They're healthy, they're skilled and they're reliable.

The school system has done that for us. The school system, in many ways, is much like the hydro system: having reliable power available at cost. There are key reasons why the United Nations chose Canada as the best country in the world to live in for five years in a row. Ontario is the economic engine of this nation and the biggest province within this nation too, so a lot of that credit has to go to Ontario, but, I've got to tell you, not from the sort of things you've done. That is the benefit of years of investment in our school system: primary, secondary, post-secondary, technical school, universities; our resources; our transportation networks in terms of rail and roads but also water; the availability of reliable power at cost. There are some very key reasons why we have the standard of living that we have and that we've enjoyed the prosperity that we have over the years. Education is one of those key components.

This report that you funded, headed up by someone that the Minister of Public Safety and Security says is a good guy, says that this is "a worrying signal that an important contributor to our competitiveness and prosperity, especially in our metro areas, is at some risk."

Why aren't you responding to that? The report also said this: "Results from this year's surveys clearly illustrate the flaws in Ontario's education policy. It is not based on coherent educational objectives. Funding is insufficient and funding is not distributed fairly across the province." Isn't that interesting? One of the cornerstones of why you brought in your whole new funding formula was because you said you wanted to equalize it across the province. You said, "Why should there be a difference between the amount of money spent on someone's education in Toronto and somebody's in Thunder Bay?" We said to you there are very good reasons why.

Isn't this something? "Funding is not based on coherent educational objectives." That's what he said about your policy. It's not based on coherent educational objectives. "Funding is insufficient and funding is not distributed fairly across the province."

I would say, respectfully, that's about as objective an opinion from an expert as you're going to get, especially since you paid for it. Why aren't you acting like this is important? Why doesn't this budget act like this is important? Why doesn't this budget address these issues: the crisis that exists in our education system?

I think some of you are going to be pretty shocked when you starting going out on the hustings and you start going to debates in the coming election. I've got to tell

some of you that I'm not sure what worlds you've been looking at. These comments are a lot more reflective of the reality I see in Hamilton than what you say in the House.

The Acting Speaker: It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45 of the clock this evening.

The House adjourned at 1800.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon James K. Bartleman

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
Ancaster-Dundas-	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Marie (L)
Flamborough-Aldershot		Hamilton West / -Ouest	Christopherson, David (ND)
Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Hastings-Frontenac-	Dombrowsky, Leona (L)
Beaches-East York	Prue, Michael (ND)	Lennox and Addington	
Bramalea-Gore-Malton-	Gill, Raminder (PC)	Huron-Bruce	Johns, Hon / L'hon Helen (PC)
Springdale			Minister of Agriculture and Food /
Brampton Centre / -Centre	Spina, Joseph (PC)		ministre de l'Agriculture et de
Brampton West-Mississauga /	Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC)		l'Alimentation
Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Minister of Health and Long-Term	Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the
	Care / ministre de la Santé et des		New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau
	Soins de longue durée		Parti démocratique
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kingston and the Islands /	Gerretsen, John (L)
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kingston et les îles	
Burlington	Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC)
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)		Deputy Premier, Minister of Education /
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)		vice-première ministre, ministre de
Don Valley East / -Est	Caplan, David (L)		l'Éducation
Don Valley West / -Ouest	Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
	Associate Minister of Enterprise,	Lanark-Carleton	Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC)
	Opportunity and Innovation / ministre		Attorney General, minister responsible
	associé de l'Entreprise, des Débouchés		for native affairs / procureur général,
	et de l'Innovation		ministre délégué aux Affaires
Dufferin-Peel-	Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie (PC) Premier		autochtones
Wellington-Grey	and President of the Executive Council,	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W.
	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs /		(PC) Minister of Public Safety and
	premier ministre et président du		Security / ministre de la Sûreté et de la
	Conseil exécutif, ministre des Affaires		Sécurité publique
	intergouvernementales		Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC)
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Eglinton-Lawrence	Colle, Mike (L)	London-Centre-Nord	Universities, minister responsible for
Elgin-Middlesex-London	Peters, Steve (L)		women's issues / ministre de la
Erie-Lincoln	Hudak, Hon / L'hon Tim (PC)		Formation et des Collèges et Universités,
	Minister of Consumer and Business		ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
	Services / ministre des Services aux	London West / -Ouest	Wood, Bob (PC)
	consommateurs et aux entreprises	London-Fanshawe	Mazzilli, Frank (PC)
Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L)	Markham	Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC)
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Etobicoke North / -Nord	Hastings, John (PC)		Cabinet, Minister of Culture / président
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)		du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement,
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)		ministre de la Culture
Guelph-Wellington	Elliott, Hon / L'hon Brenda (PC)	Mississauga Centre / -Centre	Sampson, Rob (PC)
	Minister of Community, Family and	Mississauga East / -Est	DeFaria, Hon / L'hon Carl (PC)
	Children's Services / ministre des		Minister of Citizenship, minister
	Services à la collectivité, à la famille		responsible for seniors / ministre des
	et à l'enfance		Affaires civiques, ministre délégué aux
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)		Affaires des personnes âgées
Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Hodgson, Chris (PC)	Mississauga South / -Sud	Marland, Margaret (PC)
Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)		

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Nepean-Carleton	Baird, Hon / L'hon John R. (PC) Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, government House leader / ministre de l'Énergie, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones, parlementaire du gouvernement	Scarborough Southwest / -Sud-Ouest	Newman, Hon / L'hon Dan (PC) Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre associé de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Niagara Centre / -Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Alvin (L)
Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)	Simcoe North / -Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)
Nipissing	McDonald, AL (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Minister of the Environment / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines, ministre de l'Environnement
Northumberland	Galt, Hon / L'hon Doug (PC) Minister without Portfolio, chief government whip / ministre sans portefeuille, whip en chef du gouvernement	St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)
Oak Ridges	Klees, Hon / L'hon Frank (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	St Paul's	Bryant, Michael (L)
Oakville	Carr, Hon / L'hon Gary (PC) Speaker / Président	Stoney Creek	Clark, Hon / L'hon Brad (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Oshawa	Ouellette, Hon / L'hon Jerry J. (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles	Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh	Cleary, John C. (L)
Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Ottawa-Orléans	Coburn, Hon / L'hon Brian (PC) Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs	Thornhill	Molinari, Hon / L'hon Tina R. (PC) Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre associée des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	McLeod, Lyn (L)
Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / -Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Ottawa-Vanier	Boyer, Claudette (Ind)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Ramsay, David (L)
Oxford	Hardeman, Hon / L'hon Ernie (PC) Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre associé des Affaires municipales et du Logement	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Parkdale-High Park	Kennedy, Gerard (L)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Smitherman, George (L)
Parry Sound-Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)	Toronto-Danforth	Churley, Marilyn (ND)
Perth-Middlesex	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Trinity-Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Sorbara, Greg (L)
Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC) Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances	Waterloo-Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC)
Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Whitby-Ajax	Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation / ministre de l'Entreprise, des Débouchés et de l'Innovation
Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Willowdale	Young, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Windsor West / -Ouest	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
Sault Ste Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)	Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Dwight (L)
Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)	York Centre / -Centre	Kwinter, Monte (L)
Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)	York North / -Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)
		Mississauga West / -Ouest	Vacant

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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of Ontario**

Fourth Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Quatrième session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 24 June 2003

Mardi 24 juin 2003

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 24 June 2003

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 24 juin 2003

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INTERIM SUPPLY

Hon Tina R. Molinari (Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I seek unanimous consent to move a motion prior to orders of the day without notice, amendment or debate respecting the interim supply motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Do we have—no.

The Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon Mrs Molinari: I move government notice of motion number 57: That the Minister of Finance be authorized to pay the salaries of the civil servants and other necessary payments pending the voting of supply for the period commencing April 1, 2003 and ending September 30, 2003. Such payments to be charged to the proper appropriation following the voting of supply.

1850

The Acting Speaker: Mrs Molinari has moved government notice of motion number 57. Minister?

Hon Mrs Molinari: Interim supply is one of the most important motions that is proposed by the government of the Legislature. It is this motion that, if passed, gives government the authority to continue its many programs that benefit the people of Ontario and to operate the daily business of government. Approval of the motion for interim supply gives the government permission to send money to municipalities, hospitals and school boards around the province; it gives permission to pay social assistance benefits to those in need; and it gives permission to pay the salaries of Ontario's civil service.

The motion for interim supply does not specify a dollar amount but proposes to grant authority to spend for a specific period of time. Approval of this motion for interim supply would cover the six-month period from April 1, 2003, to September 30, 2003. Without spending authority, statutory payments can continue to be made. These payments include interest on the public debt and all payments from special purpose accounts. However, unlike the statutory payments, scheduled and unscheduled payments could not be made without passage of an interim supply motion. These include payments to nursing homes, hospitals, doctors, municipalities, general

welfare recipients, children's aid societies and suppliers' accounts.

Teachers and health care professionals are just some of the members of the broader public service whose salaries are paid for by our government through the taxes of all working Ontarians—dedicated professionals like our teachers and professors, who prepare our youth for tomorrow, and doctors, nurses and other health care professionals, who care for the sick and the elderly.

I know the hard work that these professionals do. My sister is a nurse at the Barrie hospital, and she tells me about the dedicated staff and colleagues she has, who work so hard for all of our elderly and sick in our hospitals. I want to thank all of the health care workers and all the public service workers for all the work that they do on our behalf. Many of them live in Thornhill and many of them work in Thornhill, my wonderful riding. I'm certainly grateful for all of the work they do.

Interim supply gives our government the authority to spend, but we must make responsible choices to ensure we stay on the course of prosperity. Since 1995, our government has been pursuing a very deliberate plan to place Ontario on the path of growth and prosperity and to keep it there. It's very important that we keep our plan of growth and prosperity.

Our sound fiscal plan has produced historic results. We have added over 1,078,000 jobs to the province's economy since 1995. This year we are on track to achieving our fifth consecutive balanced budget. That's five balanced budgets.

Interjections.

Hon Mrs Molinari: I know that the opposition heckles over five balanced budgets, something they were not able to achieve, but this government has achieved it. Not only that, but we have also paid down \$5 billion toward the debt. We have introduced 225 tax cuts, 17 of them introduced in this year's budget. We have also introduced the equity in education tax credit, which is one tax credit that is very, very important to my riding of Thornhill. There are several parents in the riding of Thornhill who feel that this is an absolute, important tax credit, an absolute initiative for this government to take on.

I want to quote some of the members of the Thornhill riding who have said how important this is. We have Rabbi Israel Janowski, who is a Thornhill parent with kids in a Jewish day school. He's also a founder and former president of the Ontario Association of Jewish Day Schools. This is an individual who's very involved

in his community, who is very, very involved in the school system. This is what Rabbi Janowski said:

"We are happy that the Eves government has taken into account the educational needs of each child in the province. We are tremendously appreciative of the support we have received from this government and others who were supportive of this initiative."

It's not just people from Thornhill who believe that the equity in education tax credit is a fair tax credit for the people who choose to send their children to a school other than the publicly funded system. John Vanasselt of the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools has said:

"We are very pleased that the Ernie Eves government has reaffirmed its commitment to parental choice in education by restoring the tax credit."

"We also support the government's initiative to keep parents informed as to how our schools evaluate students' progress."

These are just two of many, many people who support this government on the decisions that this government makes, especially with respect to giving parental choice, because that's what this tax credit is about.

Robert Samery, a parent of three children attending Jewish day schools, has said, "This announcement has brought Ontario back in line with most other Canadian provinces by providing parents choice and empowerment in their children's education."

These are just some examples of what people from Thornhill and across the province are saying about some of the policies of this government.

We introduced a new set of fundamentals to fiscal and economic management of this province. We took control of our finances through cutting waste and prudent fiscal management. This resulted in balanced budgets. Did I say "five years of balanced budgets"? It's five years of balanced budgets and debt repayment—another \$5 billion in debt repayment.

We introduced disciplined management of public spending to focus on key priorities and to ensure more efficient and effective delivery of government programs and services.

We cut taxes to raise personal incomes, to make Ontario more competitive with all of our trading partners and to support investment and job creation.

We cleared away unnecessary regulations that were weakening investor and employer confidence and that were crippling investment and initiative. To date, we have eliminated more than 2,000 unnecessary and outdated regulations.

We have introduced balanced and innovative regulatory approaches across the government and improved regulatory protections in a number of areas such as clean water and clean air, which are all very important to the people of Thornhill and to the people of Ontario.

A sound regulatory system can do much to promote confidence, efficiency, competitiveness and growth while protecting health, safety, the environment and other vital public interests.

We have also implemented measures to increase transparency and accountability of the government's report-

ing. On April 1, 2003, the government's spending authority and appropriation control moved to the accrual basis of accounting, which significantly increases the government's accountability to the taxpayers. One of the main priorities and thrusts of this party and this government is to be accountable to our taxpayers. A lot of our policies reflect the accountability that we feel any government has to those who elect them and put them in office.

We made key investments in priority areas to meet the needs of our growing population, to improve the quality of life of our citizens, to build opportunity and to support economic growth.

The average private sector forecast for real growth is 2.6% in 2003 and 3.4% in 2004. Strong economic fundamentals reinforced by sound fiscal policies will help to maintain Ontario's healthy economic growth, despite the negative economic impact of SARS and the higher-than-expected Canadian dollar.

1900

Ours is the first government to receive nine credit rating improvements from Standard and Poor's, including four upgrades to our long-term rating—five balanced budgets, for those in the opposition who are asking; five years of balanced budgets, \$5 billion toward our debt.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Standard and Poor's said they don't have a balanced budget.

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of order. I apologize, Minister.

Hon Mrs Molinari: I will reiterate that ours is the first government to receive—

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Public Safety and Security): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: An NDPer wouldn't know a balanced budget if he tripped over one.

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of order either. Let's not do that this evening.

Hon Mrs Molinari: Thank you, Mr Speaker, but that was an important interruption. I value my colleague's input on any debate that we're having in the Legislature.

I do want to reiterate that ours is the first government to receive nine credit rating improvements from Standard and Poor's, including four upgrades to our long-term rating. There are, of course, other indicators that reflect the strength of our economy. Ontario's unemployment rate is 7.1%. That's lower than the national rate of 7.8%.

Since our government took office in 1995, 618,292 fewer people in Ontario depend on welfare. These are people who have found jobs; these are people who are now working. Our government believes in a hand up, not a hand out. These people are now working. They have the dignity of a job. That's what this government has been able to provide for these individuals. Consumer confidence is up 20%; housing starts are up over 114%; real disposable income has increased by nearly 21%; Ontario's economy has grown more than 32%, compared to just over 28% in the rest of Canada. It's clear that Ontario is leading the way in Canada in economic growth

and prosperity. We have created a province where people want to come, live, work and raise a family because it's a province of prosperity.

Revenues to pay for programs and services have risen by \$14 billion last year. By the end of the current fiscal year, those revenues are expected to have risen by \$16 billion. Since when, you might ask. Since we began cutting taxes. That's when it all started. It's cutting taxes that created the prosperity that we have in Ontario.

The opposition members don't want to believe it, but it's clear, it's fact, it's true. Cutting taxes raises revenue and allows the government to invest in priority areas such as health care, education and the environment. We have achieved these results by listening to the people of Ontario and by moving forward with a sound fiscal plan. We have put in place the right fundamentals to help protect the provincial economy from unexpected events.

Now more than ever, it is time to stick to an economic plan that works. It's clear that this is a plan that works. The foundation of strong economic fundamentals that we have put in place will help Toronto and Ontario bounce back more quickly from the impact of SARS.

On May 28, 2003, our government announced \$720 million worth of measures to support the health care sector and front-line employees following the recent outbreak of SARS. And where is the federal government?

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): In Ottawa.

Hon Mrs Molinari: They're nowhere to be seen. That's right, they're in Ottawa. I don't know what they're doing in Ottawa. They're certainly not supporting Ontario.

Interjection: And Dalton McGuinty's making excuses.

Hon Mrs Molinari: And Dalton McGuinty's making excuses for their federal cousins, as we've seen today during question period. That they think \$250 million is—

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: It's been called to my attention that the minister has called the wrong motion, that her House leader's staff wanted her to call the notice of motion number 56, not notice of motion number 57. In the interests of this government being accommodated, I'm prepared to let this debate collapse and the minister can then call notice of motion number 56—if she wants, I'll call it—and then we can proceed with proper debate on the proper motion, because motion 56, as I understand it, is written to comply with the new requirements of the Ministry of Finance in terms of the accounting rules that have been adopted by the bureaucracy. And of course it's an interim supply motion that nobody here was going to dispute, because we received a memo from the government House leader on the Ministry of Finance letterhead indicating that this was going to be the new language being used for interim supply motions, correct? So, yes, 56 is an interim supply motion; no dispute with that.

Perhaps Mrs Molinari should be given a chance to roll back the tape and start over again, calling notice of motion number 56. My apologies for interrupting you.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: Well, it's not the minister's fault because she's left there on her own.

The Acting Speaker: We have a government notice that we are debating. The order is in order. We should continue to debate it unless the minister has other views, I suspect.

Hon Mrs Molinari: I think the Speaker has spoken. It is the proper motion that we are debating here today.

On May 28, 2003, our government announced \$720 million worth of measures to support the health care sector and front-line employees following the recent outbreak of SARS. I want to say again that the federal government was nowhere to be seen with assistance for the province of Ontario for any of these funds.

This \$720 million supplements the \$118 million worth of measures to aid the tourism sector announced by the government on April 29, 2003, and the June 13 announcement that we will compensate workers who lost wages due to quarantine by public health officials.

This government has also introduced a temporary retail sales tax holiday for admissions and transient accommodation from May 1, 2003, to September 30, 2003. This initiative sends a positive signal to the tourism industry while encouraging tourists to enjoy the hotels and attractions that Ontario has to offer. The members opposite can also enjoy the attractions Ontario has to offer, especially those that are from outside of Toronto enjoy what we have in Toronto. It's a beautiful city.

Be assured that we will do whatever it takes to help Toronto recover from this setback.

The absence of the federal government in assisting Toronto is absolutely astonishing, and it's a shame that they would not consider Ontario the same way they consider other provinces that encounter the same types of disasters.

Since 1995, this government has continued to make tough decisions and responsible choices. We have focused on creating conditions to increase growth and achieve the highest quality of life for the people of Ontario.

We have stuck to our plan. In Ontario, our government has set investment priorities based on the values of everyday Ontario taxpayers. We know that these taxpayers are not reckless spenders. We know that the taxpayers know how to spend their money, and this is why we believe in tax cuts, in putting more money into their pockets and allowing them to spend the money how they see fit. We have seen that tax cuts not only create jobs but provide prosperity in the province because, when Ontarians have more money in their pockets, they're out spending money, and as they spend money it creates jobs.

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We know they believe in balancing their books and spending wisely, like everyone in their household balances their books and spends their money wisely. We know they want the same from this government. They expect the same from a government as they do with their own money. If a government is spending taxpayers' money, it should be spent as if it was your own money.

Balanced budgets, paying off the debt and making sure your decisions and everything you spend that money on is clearly necessary. It's a priority that Ontarians have. The ability to set priorities is perhaps the most important aspect of effective, efficient and accountable government planning.

The Ontario SuperBuild Corp is responsible for the strategic management of the government's investment plan, including investment in the province's own assets and transfers to capital purposes like hospitals, municipalities and post-secondary educational institutions. In 2003-04, SuperBuild will invest approximately \$3.2 billion in Ontario's infrastructure.

The government will invest over \$1 million in highway planning, expansion and rehabilitation in 2003-04. The province is also investing \$359 million in 2003-04 in transit assistance through the transit investment plan, which includes GO Transit and the renewal of municipal transit systems through the transit renewal program.

In the health sector, this fiscal year the province will invest \$504 million in hospitals, community health and long-term-care capital initiatives. This will enable hospitals and other health care providers to continue to modernize, retrofit and expand their infrastructure and services across the province.

In post-secondary education capital, \$97 million will be invested this year. Thornhill is located in York region. We've had many new students come into York region who need post-secondary education when they graduate, and what I'm hearing from my constituents is that they see this is a government that is behaving responsibly. We have looked after all of the students who will be entering post-secondary education in September. Our Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, Dianne Cunningham, has worked very hard to make sure there's a place for every qualified student in Ontario in post-secondary education. Students are now being accepted to the post-secondary institutions that they selected to go to.

I want to congratulate all the students who have been accepted in post-secondary institutions. I want to wish them well as they pursue their years in post-secondary education in the province because we have some of the best colleges and universities in Ontario.

For environmental purposes, investments will be \$116 million in 2003-04, which will include \$45 million for upgrades to drinking water systems and other infrastructure at Ontario parks and \$15 million for environmental cleanup projects. The province is also investing \$15 million for ongoing implementation of Ontario's Living Legacy: \$7 million for watershed-based source protection and \$5 million to improve conservation authority dams.

SuperBuild will also continue to make investments in municipal partnership initiatives. Of the \$3.2 billion SuperBuild plans to invest in 2003-04, \$608 million is for municipal and local infrastructure. These investments need to be made to ensure Ontario's economic growth remains on the right path. The 2003 Ontario budget

reflects the priorities we heard from the people of Ontario during pre-budget consultations in 17 communities.

Economic growth, spurred by tax cuts, has enabled this government to invest in priority programs and services such as health care, education and the environment. The passage of the motion for interim supply will permit spending that specifically benefits two of these priorities: health care and education.

We have made, and continue to make, significant investments in health care to meet our commitments of improving and modernizing Ontario's hospitals. In 1995, Ontario was investing \$17.6 billion annually in health care operating expenditures. This year Ontario will invest \$27.6 billion in health care. That's an increase of \$10 billion since we came to office.

I hope all members of this Legislature will recognize the importance of passing this bill in the House this evening. I thank you for giving me the opportunity to enter this debate on this very important bill.

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to take an opportunity to recognize Aileen Muan and her proud parents, Alberto and Permina Muan, who are from my great riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale and are visiting us this evening. Please welcome them.

The Acting Speaker: Welcome.

That, of course, is not a point of order. Further debate?

Mr Gerretsen: Let me just say that obviously we want to see that transfer payments are being made, so that all the different organizations around the province that depend on provincial funding, such as our nursing homes, our homes for the aged, our universities, colleges and schools, get their funding; there's no question about that. Also, I think I should pay tribute to the thousands upon thousands of hard-working, dedicated civil servants we have working for the province, either directly or in one of the institutions I talked about before.

I found it very interesting that when the minister talked about accountability, she wouldn't agree with me that perhaps this is the perfect time to pass Bill 6, which I introduced in this House and that had second reading in the previous session and has gone through committee and is ready for a final vote in this House any time it's called. It basically calls for greater accountability for hospitals, universities, colleges and other organizations that receive grants and other transfer payments from the government or crown agencies.

It would give the Provincial Auditor the power to basically follow the money, because you and I know, Speaker, that probably somewhere around 60% of all the funds being spent by the province are not being spent by the province directly but in effect are being expended by the transfer agents I mentioned before. I can't for the life of me understand why a government that has loved talking about accountability for the last eight years is unwilling to actually implement a bill—to call a bill for third reading that has been given approval in committee, that has been given second reading in the House—that would allow exactly that to happen: to have greater

accountability as to how taxpayers' money is being spent. They're all talking about accountability, but when you get right down to it, they don't mean a word of it.

I also think it's kind of interesting, for those people who may be watching who saw the earlier kerfuffle as to what motion was actually being called, that we may have a major problem here. It is my understanding that since the government has now gone to an accrual method of accounting, order number 56 should have been called and not number 57. I think the government has made another huge mistake by calling the wrong order, and this may very well cause us to be here on Friday and on Monday—not on Tuesday, since that's Canada Day—and we'll sit the whole summer. A government that's been in charge for eight years now—to not even get the proper motion before the House, to make sure that the transfer payments are being made to the nursing homes and the homes for the aged and all the other institutions out there and to pay our own civil servants, is a pretty sad state of affairs. I hope the government can get its act together. If not, well, we'll have to be back here next week as well.

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I like to refer to the last eight years as the cruel years—the eight cruel years. Yes, some people are better off than they were in 1995, but you and I know, Speaker, that an awful lot of people out there are a lot worse off. I look at government as being the institution that levels the playing field amongst those who have and those who haven't as far as getting health care services, as far as getting educational services out there, so that everyone has an equal opportunity and an equal chance in life. That's what the role of government should be, whether we're talking about the provincial, the national or the local level.

In that regard, this government has failed the people of Ontario about as dramatically and as dastardly as you can think of. The people at the lower end of the totem pole, the people who need help and assistance, whether they're the vulnerable in hospitals or the elderly in our long-term-care facilities, are the people who have been failed, whether it's the student out there who is now paying 40% more in tuition fees, or the student for whom the OSAP loans are more and more difficult to get, or the person who lives on an Ontario disability pension. You can just go on and on. Those people are a lot worse off. You may very well recall that within the first couple of months of this government taking over in 1995, the first thing they did was cut the social assistance payments for those people who need it by 22%. That was sort of an indication of the eight cruel years that followed.

That continues. They like to make a great issue about the senior citizen tax credit program. Obviously they're trying to buy the election, or a certain number of people in the electorate who will be enticed by it. There is a certain amount of enticement for that. I can well imagine, if you're sitting there in a home and somebody says to you, "You're going to get the education portion back of your property taxes," that there's a certain kind of appeal to that.

We on this side of the House are saying that Frank Stronach doesn't need \$27,000. A lot of the other people too who live in multi-million dollar homes don't need a rebate of \$20,000 to \$25,000. The people who really need the help are the people who are in our nursing homes, so that they can get more personal care and nursing care service. You may recall that right now we rank absolutely dead last in the 10 jurisdictions that this government has studied in the amount and the number of hours of nursing and personal care that we're able to provide to people in nursing homes and long-term-care facilities.

We're saying, you want to spend \$450 million? Don't give it to all the seniors out there; give it to those seniors who need it. Spend \$225 million of that in our nursing homes, and spend it in our long-term-care facilities and homes for the aged. Spend the other \$225 million in home care so that particularly elderly people can stay in their own home much longer. That's the much-preferred situation for everybody. Everybody would love to stay in their own home as long as possible, but some people need help.

When you look at all the people who have been cut off from home care over the last four to five years—that \$225 million, according to the Ontario Long Term Care Association, is what they need to give to various community care access centres around the province so that there is enough money in the system for home care so that people aren't arbitrarily cut off once they exceed 60 hours per month of home care.

That's where the priorities should be. We say, yes, invest \$450 million in the seniors of this province. But at least do it for those seniors that need help in either home care or in nursing homes.

Let's talk about a couple of other issues, since we're allowed to do this under this motion, even though this appears to be the wrong motion and we may have to go through all this again. The SARS money: a perfect example where you have this government basically trying to set up the federal government as the bad guys.

Dalton McGuinty brought a motion forward today—actually it was yesterday; it was placed on the order paper today—which basically says in its most simplistic terms, "Why don't we have the Provincial Auditor actually audit the expenses that have been incurred by hospitals and other suppliers?" I have the exact motion here; let me just read it to you. I'll read the entire motion to you: "In order to strengthen the province's rightful case for disaster relief and other financial assistance for SARS from the federal government, the Ontario Legislative Assembly hereby exercises its authority under ... the Audit Act to direct the Provincial Auditor to prepare a report outlining the amount of additional expenditures that have been or will need to be incurred as a result of SARS by the government of Ontario, its municipalities, hospitals and all other organizations."

What could be more direct than that: let's get an independent assessment of how much the different organizations are actually out as a result of money being

required for SARS? It seems to me that if you want to make the case to the federal government that the province of Ontario, in one way or another, is actually out that money, that's how you build a business case.

But for a minister of the crown to get up one day and say, "We need \$700 million from the federal government," and say a couple of days later, "Well, I think it's a billion dollars," etc, to my way of thinking, is totally unaccountable and totally unrealistic. Surely to goodness, whether you're in Ontario or anywhere else in Canada, any other level of government from whom you're trying to get assistance has a right to get a report prepared that is done in a professional way. There is no better way to do that than through the independence of the Office of the Provincial Auditor.

Yet what happened here today? Well, there was a lot of name-calling during question period. As a matter of fact, Mr Speaker, you were almost forced into a situation where you were asked to throw a number of members out for disorderly behaviour etc. To my way of thinking, the government could easily have gone along with this motion and built a strong case so that the people of Ontario could benefit in a more direct way from the amount of money they're going to get from the federal government. That's how you do it.

Let's talk about one other issue that's out there, the hydro issue. I spoke about this issue at some length some time ago. I remember a speech that was given by the member from Nipissing-Pembroke. I guess tomorrow or the next day will be his last day in the House after 28 years of meritorious service in this House. This gives me an opportunity to pay tribute to Sean Conway. He's always been a mentor to the people of eastern Ontario, particularly in the days when we weren't as fortunate to have as many Liberal seats as we have today.

He made the point, with which I totally agree, that one of the main problems when it comes to hydro is the lack of supply. We have to build the supply of hydroelectric power in this province by somewhere between 20% and 30% in the almost immediate future. Why is nobody on the government side really addressing that issue? Instead, we've taken the easy way out—and I know we voted in favour of it as well—of guaranteeing everybody a rate of 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour for the next three years.

You and I know, Speaker, that since that's been in effect, it has cost the taxpayers of Ontario close to a billion dollars, because we've had to buy that power outside Ontario—in the States or wherever we buy power to make up the 20% to 30% deficit we currently have—at much more than 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour.

To me it's almost totally unsustainable to keep that going for a long period of time. Yes, the ratepayer will be happy for a certain period of time, because obviously the rates are going to be flattened and not have the tremendous gyrations they had in them last year at this time. On the other hand, are we any better off if we add another \$4 billion to \$5 billion to the public debt or to the hydro debt of this province during that period of time? That's what we have to come to terms with.

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We have already said that one of the first issues a McGuinty government would have to deal with, should we be fortunate enough to win the next election, is the hydro situation.

As I indicated before, I think it was very interesting last week that the government of Ontario finally approached the government of Manitoba to see what could be done with respect to importing some power or getting involved in a major power project in Manitoba, from which Ontario could benefit as well. I think we have to make those same approaches to the province of Quebec. We have to do something about installing Beck 3, as it were, in Niagara Falls.

I certainly don't pretend to be an expert in this whole energy situation, but I think it's a known fact that in the long run, hydroelectric power is probably the cheapest power to produce by far. So why aren't we looking at that, particularly when you look at the fact that some of our nuclear plants have in effect been shut down, or their maintenance and repair program is taking much longer? Today we heard—and I've forgotten whether it was Pickering or one of the other nuclear plants—in effect, it's not coming on-stream; there has been a delay in that again.

The government has had to resort to putting temporary generators outside some cities. Obviously, if it's necessary, it's necessary, but it certainly gives me the impression that it almost speaks to something of the Third World. It's the kind of thing you expect to see in an undeveloped country, but certainly not in the developed economy that we have here in Ontario.

I say that there has been an awful lot of grandstanding on that issue, but what has the government really done to deal with that particular issue? It's something that has to be dealt with almost immediately if we should be fortunate enough to form the next government.

In the final few moments I have left—and maybe I have no more time left, if my timing is correct. Under these new rules, our time to speak is limited. There's so much to say, particularly since this may be the last opportunity before the next election. There are so many issues to talk about. We could be talking about health care issues, education issues, environment issues or the smog situation out there, but unfortunately I won't have any further time to do that.

Speaker, I wish you a good summer and I hope we'll see you back again in the fall. With that, I'll just take my seat.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe that we have a serious issue in front of us with respect to the propriety of this particular motion.

Mr Kormos: It's not improper. It's just not good.

Mr Duncan: Not the propriety but the wording of it; excuse me. The government submitted two government notices of motion on to the order paper, number 56 and number 57. We are debating number 57. I have in my hand a briefing note from the Ministry of Finance that was forwarded to us by the government House leader—

The Acting Speaker: I heard this point of order from the member from Niagara Centre. There is nothing out of order with number 57.

Mr Duncan: Mr Speaker, if I might: we have a briefing note here that says the wording of this motion is not—

The Acting Speaker: That might be. However, the order that is before the House is in order.

Mr Kormos: What the opposition House leader was trying to say—I'm using my speaking time now, you see.

The Acting Speaker: Start the clock.

Mr Kormos: Let's get going. Thank you.

Of course the motion is in order. If it hadn't been in order, the Clerk would have said it isn't in order. But the minister called the wrong motion, and here we in the opposition parties have been scrambling, trying to help the government. Look, I concede that it doesn't happen often but I'm embarrassed for the government this evening. They've had a bad month in terms of the press. The last thing we need is for this government to literally blow another sessional day on the wrong interim supply motion. Good grief. As it is, the government won't be able to get its Bill 41—remember the budget bill that it promised would be moved, debated and passed before the House rose on June 26? Sorry, folks, it's not going to happen. Yikes.

What Mr Duncan was trying to tell you—and he's going to take the floor in short order himself—is that the government filed two notices of motion. Now if you take a look at the record, you'll see that your motion number 57 is consistent with interim supply motions of the past—no two ways about it. I, for instance, sent one of the legislative staff down to the library just a few minutes. On October 22, 2002, Mr Tsubouchi moved the right motion. That was in the wording of notice of motion number 57.

The problem is that you've amended the Financial Administration Act since then. You changed the whole nature of government accounting. There is this memo—Mr Duncan has one, I've got one, half the world has one—from the legal services branch of finance. This is the high-priced help. The memo says, "Up until April 1, 2003"—that, friends, was over two months ago—"the finances of the government was based on a modified-cash accounting basis. Under this accounting basis," before April 1, 2003, "The government sought approval from the House for supply based on payments made." Listen carefully: "Transactions were booked on the finances when payments were made. This accounting system did not take into consideration that such payments were often made as the result of encumbrances made earlier, often in past fiscal years. In addition, this method of accounting did not reflect other non-cash expenses incurred by government, including depreciation on assets."

Way back in the year 2000—and I know that every member of the government caucus went to a briefing on this and recalls that briefing as if it were yesterday—"the Public Service Accounting Board recommended that

Ontario and other governments adopt an accrual accounting method for government expenses to recognize these non-cash expenses and also to recognize these non-cash expenses when the encumbrances were incurred."

"In 2002," and that's where we get to the government's amendments to Financial Administration Act, "the government moved to adopt the accrual accounting method for government finances"—this is where the big asterisk should be, this is where the underscoring should be, this is where the bold print should be—"starting with the fiscal year 2003-04," to wit today, or as Mr Marchese would say, "aujourd'hui." "The move to accrual accounting was part of the 2002 budget."

"In 2002, amendments were made to the Financial Administration Act, the Treasury Board Act, 1991 and the Ministry of Treasury and Economics Act, as part of the spring 2002 budget bill and fall 2002 budget bill, to implement the accrual accounting method for Ontario government finances."

Now I want you folks on the government benches to know that we did not support those bills, but you did. You voted for them, and indeed you used your majority to pass them. So those amendments became law and this is what the amendments did:

"The Financial Administration Act was amended to ensure that both cash and non-cash expenditures were included in the definition of appropriation in the act. The amendments had the effect of requiring"—and this is important; it should be in bold print, underscored—"that non-cash expenditures be included in estimates of expenditures submitted for consideration by the Legislature."

"Amendments to Financial Administration Act prohibited the incurring of non-cash expenses, such as depreciation on a capital asset, without an appropriation. This same restriction applies to the making of cash payments. These amendments went on to provide that this prohibition did not affect the ability of the government to make cash payments or incur non-cash expenses under the authority of a motion for interim supply passed by the House."

Perhaps there's somebody who could take this to the Hansard desk. It would save this young woman a whole lot of grief.

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That takes us up to the present. Now, you had two notices of motion. You had notice of motion number 56, which would have been the proper interim supply motion prior to your 2002 amendments to, among other things, the Financial Administration Act. You also filed notice of motion number 57, which is the interim supply motion that you need after your amendments. The motion that you wanted to call was 56—57, and I correct if I inverted those two—

Hon Mrs Molinari: Why did you give unanimous consent?

Mr Kormos: You don't need unanimous consent because you filed the notice of motion. What's the matter with you guys? You've tabled the notice, for Pete's sake. You don't need unanimous consent. You call it as of

right. That's why you table notices of motion. Lord love a duck. I'm not going to give you unanimous consent for anything. That's why you've got to file the notice of motion. For Pete's sake, don't go whining about how you sought unanimous consent. Of course I'm not going to give you unanimous consent. I wouldn't give you unanimous consent to tell you what the time of day is. That's the way it is around here. I didn't create that hostile climate. I didn't create that frigid antipathy between the government and opposition parties; you did.

This place used to work in a co-operative way. Yet do I get any credit for rising to the occasion? Did you give me any credit for standing up here and saying, "Ms Molinari, you called the wrong notice. You should have called notice number 56"? No, you said, "You're wrong. We're right." You did. I tried to pull you out of a jackpot and I get rebuffed in a crude way.

Interjections.

Mr Kormos: In a more civil climate, somebody would apologize to me, but I don't expect it here.

Here I am doing my best to try to pull your feet out of the fire, trying to explain to you that you're debating the wrong motion. You could have had time to beg forgiveness and sought the assistance of the opposition parties in cleaning up the mess you made—

Mr Christopherson: We're here to help.

Mr Kormos: —because, as Mr Christopherson says, "We're here to help." But, no, you want to stubbornly forge ahead. You don't want to read the memos that come from your own House leader's office. Your House leader sent me a memo explaining why motion number 56 was the right motion, as compared to motion number 57. My caucus mates reviewed that motion with me. They said, "Of course, we're going to assist the government in acquiring interim supply. We may not vote for it, but we know these things have to be done. It's part of the rigors of governing."

The problem is, here you go—and now you're going to say, "We want your co-operation," after you hurt our feelings? No, it doesn't work that way, not at all, not after you mock us and hurt our feelings and offend us. And then you want our help? No. Didn't your mama teach you nothing? When I grew up, my old grandmother was very careful to explain to me—you know, it's like Bob Dylan said: "If you live outside the law, you must be honest." The problem is that if you're going to do these sorts of things, you can't then offend the people whom you need to help you.

Far be it from me at this point to try to show you the error of your ways. I just rely upon the advice from lawyers from the Ministry of Finance—your lawyers, the ones you pay. I rely upon the advice from your government House leader. I rely upon the advice from your government House leader's staff, those hardworking people.

Here's your House leader, Mr Baird. He's aged 10 years in the last 10 minutes. He's lost his hair.

Interjection: He's losing it.

Mr Kormos: You're right. He hasn't lost all of it yet, but he is clearly in the process of losing his hair, because you may have lost or blown a sessional day when time was scarce.

I suspect some of you folks over there on the government backbenches have plans for the holiday weekend. I suggest you call your partners, spouses, kids, grandkids, neighbours' kids, distant relatives. You should get on the phone and say, "Hello, my name is so-and-so, Ontario Conservative MPP. We screwed up big time in the Legislature on Tuesday night. Even though the opposition tried to help us out and tried to clean up our mess for us before it got too big and too deep, we said, 'No way; we like screwing up.'" Tory backbenchers, get on the phone and say, "We like screwing up. We did it again, and this time we're doing it on purpose. And we did it notwithstanding the best efforts of the opposition to rescue us."

Hon Mrs Molinari: That'll be the day.

Mr Kormos: Ms Molinari, thou doth protest too much. Give me a break, because we all know I tried to give you one. But no, you wouldn't respond. Look, it's not your fault. You were in here all alone. You were all alone. Nobody was helping you. I saw your caucus mates around you. They weren't concerned. They saw you going through the papers. They didn't care whether you messed up. They figured, "Oh, Ms Molinari is going to be left hanging out there to dry. She's on her own up there north of Toronto where Ms Molinari is going to run in her campaign." They're all out there looking after themselves. Boy, oh boy, don't expect your caucus mates are behind you. Look over your shoulder. They're way behind you. You can see them on the horizon like this. They're behind you all right.

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Agriculture and Food): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I don't believe the member opposite is speaking to the bill.

The Acting Speaker: This is a motion for supply. The member for Niagara Centre.

Mr Kormos: Folks, this isn't a bill; it's a motion. If it were a bill, it would require first, second and third readings. It's a motion; it's an interim supply motion. It's a motion that has a restricted period of time for debate. It's a motion that you shouldn't have called, because it's the wrong interim supply motion because of your amendments to the Financial Administration Act.

Hon Mrs Johns: I think you're wrong.

Mr Kormos: Of course you think I'm wrong, and so does Ms Molinari. That's why your lawyers wrote a memo to everybody in this Legislature saying, "People, please be careful. Don't think you can continue to word interim supply motions in the way you always have, because this government amended the Financial Administration Act, which requires interim supply motions to be worded in this way, to wit, the way you did." Why did you file two motions? What's the matter with you guys? Why do you think there are two different motions? Because one was in compliance with the new legislation and one wasn't.

So you go ahead and finish debating this motion, and at around 9:20 we'll vote against it. I suspect you will

vote for it. It's perfectly in order, because there is nothing defective about the motion. It's just that it may not have the effect you want it to have.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: Oh, Ms Ecker. Ms Ecker will be spitting nails when she finds out about this motion. Goodness, you'll hear her from one end to the other. I remember the day Jim Flaherty bushwhacked her with the private school tax credit. I remember that day, because we were in here for the budget—was it the budget or the throne speech?

Mr Christopherson: It had to be the throne speech. We don't do budgets here.

Mr Kormos: That's right. It's been a long time.

We were in here, and there's Ms Ecker just sitting there listening, because Flaherty's the Minister of Finance at the time, and he comes out—it had to be the budget, because he comes out with the private school tax credits and I saw the O form of her mouth, and then I saw the words that followed and how she looked at Mr Flaherty. I saw her in the hallway afterwards, and her temperature had gone up around 30 degrees Celsius. She was smoking. She was on fire. I've never seen anybody that mad at a colleague here at Queen's Park. Well, that's not true. I've seen MPPs mad at colleagues—

Interjection.

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Mr Kormos: That's right. But it's been a long time since I've seen an MPP that mad at one of their colleagues. She'd been bushwhacked.

But if you think that performance, that little firestorm, was something, I bet you it was one heck of a cabinet meeting that followed that and possibly even some interesting exchanges in the caucus meeting, not that any of your caucus mates talk about what happens in caucus; I use my imagination to figure these things out. If you think that's something, you wait until Ms Ecker has to sit down to be told.

"You passed what motion? Are you guys nuts?" Holy moly. You haven't seen nothing yet.

Interjection: Tell her it's in order.

Mr Kormos: That's right. Say, "Ms Ecker, it's OK. The Clerk's table said it was in order." Of course it's in order. And say, "After all, it was the opposition parties that pointed out we passed the wrong motion," as if that'll be any justification.

Who knows? Maybe somebody is on the phone to Mrs Ecker right now, as we speak, on that cellphone. She's in the back of that Lincoln Town Car, motoring on the 401 to—

Hon Mrs Johns: Oh, come on, Peter.

Mr Kormos: Is it a Cadillac Seville, a Lincoln Town Car? Heck, I don't know. All I see are these shiny, dark cars that keep their motors running and the air conditioning going for hours at a time while they're waiting for cabinet ministers to get out to the east entrance, with little concern about conservation or smog.

All I know is they're big dark blue and black cars. What do I know about cars? I don't know cars. What do I

know about cars? But I can tell big and I can tell dark blue and black and I can tell leather interiors, because there's nothing that beats the smell of leather upholstery. You walk past that phalanx of big, black Seattles or Lincoln Town Cars or whatever the heck they are, and between the exhaust fumes you can smell the leather. So at this very moment—

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I know that Corvettes come with leather interiors, and I know the member used to drive one. Do you still have the Corvette, Peter?

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of order.

Mr Kormos: I've got to tell you there's nothing sweeter than a forest green 'Vette with a brown leather interior, ragtop down. Bowling Green, Kentucky, is where they're manufactured. My sisters and brothers in UAW down in the United States do one heck of job on Corvettes, no two ways about it.

But nothing beats the overwhelming scent of the upholstery as you see half a dozen of these Town Cars and DeVilles, gagged as they are, motors running, exhausts spewing fumes, the air conditioning causing frosting of the vent lines along the roof. It's incredible sitting outside here. Gasoline is what? These expensive Cadillac cars and Lincoln Town Cars all use high-test gas. You're talking about 68.5 cents a litre on a good day, never mind when you get to the long weekend.

So Ms Ecker could, at this very moment, be on her phone, speeding back to Queen's Park.

Hon David Turnbull (Associate Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: It's quite apparent that we know the NDP used to use Town Cars. We just use low-level GMs and Fords—

The Acting Speaker: No, no. Sit down.

Mr Kormos: I want my sisters and brothers at DaimlerChrysler to understand why Chrysler has had to reduce production here. This government refuses to buy Chryslers; only Ford and—

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: That's what the member just said: only Ford and General Motors products, and I have no qualms about that. But go out to the members' parking lot and you'll count an awful lot of Lexuses and those other offshore manufactured things. In any event, I do digress.

Ms Ecker could be speeding back here now in the back of her limo just spitting. You can just see the spit as she's trying to talk on the phone with some minion who's shaking in his or her shoes, knowing that Ms Ecker is going to be in less than fine humour when she gets here because, after all and at the end of the day, this bill is pretty relevant to her. I can hear her now: "Can't you guys ever get anything right? What's the matter? I leave this place for half an hour, and you start fouling things up."

I can see Mr Stockwell now, wherever Mr Stockwell is. Mr Stockwell is sitting in front of a large-screen TV in some high-priced hotel room somewhere with his feet up, watching the legislative channel saying, "Boy, oh boy, so

you wanted me out, did you? Look what you get for wanting me out. This never happened on my watch." To Chris Stockwell I say, "Look, you've been lucky. You were fortunate because"—

Hon Mrs Johns: On a point of order, Mr Speaker, or maybe it's a point of privilege: I think the Minister of the Environment would say it wasn't the Conservatives who wanted him out but the Liberals and the NDP.

The Acting Speaker: That would not be a point of order either. But I would caution the member for Niagara Centre: he of course knows we should use only riding names or ministerial positions.

Mr Kormos: My apologies. The former, fired, resigned government House leader and Minister of the Environment, as he was then, who is now a backbencher and who relinquished—I mean, the most unsettling thing about losing—

Hon Mrs Johns: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe the Minister of the Environment is waiting for a report from the Integrity Commissioner, and there is no problem.

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of order.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: We're playing games here. Let's just go with the debate. The member from Niagara Centre.

Mr Kormos: Anyway, the former Minister of the Environment loses that title to Mr Wilson. I mean, that's what's really steaming and frosting him. He could have handled it had it gone to Mr Gill, who would make a very good cabinet minister, if it had gone to Mr Arnott, who would be a very good cabinet minister, or if it had gone to Mr McDonald from North Bay, who has wanted to be in cabinet from the day he was elected and who needs the profile.

But do these people get appointed to cabinet? Look what happens—you've got to understand what happens. When you've got a cabinet minister like that who's been cut loose and set adrift, you've got all sorts of backbenchers rushing to get the morning papers, hoping—

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: Well, they do. This is what happens. Come on. Some of you people who were—Mr Ramsay, you were in government; you know the feeling: hoping that a minister gets cut loose so you finally get the key to the cabinet ministers' washroom. Poor Mr Gill and Mr McDonald were falling over each other, tearing open Toronto Star, Toronto Sun and Globe and Mail boxes waiting for the day.

I've got to tell you, this motion is going to end up being a very interesting part of legislative history. This is going to be a day we will all remember fondly. When I read the memoirs of any number of Conservative members, I expect at least a couple of pages referring to the day the motion died. I expect there will be at least a few pages devoted to the motion that really didn't respond to the amendments this government itself had made.

Folks, it's been interesting. It's been a great deal of fun. Ms Molinari, I did my best.

Mr Christopherson: He tried.

Mr Kormos: I tried. I just want you to know that if you ever need me again, I'll be there for you. You can count on me any time.

I surrender the floor. I know my colleague Mr Christopherson, who in all likelihood will be the mayor of Hamilton next year at this time, will want to speak to this as well.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I've been waiting for some time to respond.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. The member for Durham has the floor.

Mr O'Toole: I believe you're right, Mr Speaker; I do have the floor. We're basically at a point in time where we're debating the motion for interim supply; I believe it's notice of motion number 57. For those viewing, to bring some settlement to this debate, the member from Niagara Centre certainly got us what I'd consider a bit off the trail.

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Notice 57 says, "That the Minister of Finance be authorized to pay the salaries of the civil servants and other necessary payments pending the voting of supply for the period commencing April 1, 2003 and ending September 30, 2003. Such payments to be charged to the proper appropriation following the voting of supply. Filed on June 23, 2003."

Certainly it is my pleasure—as my colleague has mentioned, the interim supply bill is the most important motion that is passed by this Legislature, for all of the reasons that even the members of the opposition have outlined. For the record, the motion gives authority to the government to continue to pay its programs that benefit the people of Ontario, and to operate the daily business of government. It permits and gives permission to the government to send money to municipalities, hospitals and school boards around the province of Ontario, as well as paying social assistance benefits to those in need and paying salaries to the dedicated members of the Ontario civil service.

These payments are currently being made under the authority of a special warrant which was issued on March 26, 2003, and which authorized the incurrence of necessary expenditures to be made during the 2003-04 fiscal year. Those listening may have responded during question period a few weeks ago. They raised this outlandish remark about the \$36 billion that was being allocated at that time. This, of course, supersedes that. Because whenever the House is sitting, it's the orders that state that it must be debated in the House and indeed voted on here.

Payment to all our funding partners and the government programs cannot be made, once these funds are exhausted, without this important motion that we're discussing tonight. In order to ensure that all payments scheduled to be made after the Legislature recesses on June 26 reach the people who need them, it is necessary to provide the banking system, as well as the postal

system, logically, with some advance time. This lead time is especially important to individuals specifically in the far-reaching northern and other rural parts of the vast province of Ontario. I'm sure all of my colleagues in the Legislature from the north and rural areas can appreciate these concerns. It's not good enough to leave enough time so that the payments can be made just here in Toronto; all of the people in this great province of ours are important to this government as well. As such, the practice has been to provide at least five working days' lead time prior to the expiry of the current authority to ensure that payments are made everywhere. Thus, this motion must be passed without unnecessary delay or procedural wrangling. The motion for interim supply does not specify a dollar amount, but indeed provides authority to spend for a specific period of time, which I outlined just prior to these comments.

As you know, the House rules of the Ontario Legislature limit the period covered by an interim supply motion to six months. The proposed motion for interim supply would cover the six-month period from April 1, 2003, to September 30, 2003. Without spending authority, statutory payments can continue to be made. These payments include interest on public debt and all payments for special-purpose accounts. However, most scheduled and unscheduled payments cannot be paid. These include, for instance, payments to nursing homes, hospitals, doctors under OHIP, municipalities, general welfare recipients, children's aid societies and suppliers' accounts. These are suppliers that supply services to the House, as well as to other parts of the province.

The motion for interim supply must be passed to ensure that all of Ontario's dedicated civil servants continue to receive their salaries. We sometimes forget the far-reaching impact of provincial government services and those who provide them, the dedicated civil servants of Ontario. The teachers and professors who prepare our youth for productive lives, the doctors, nurses and other health care professionals and, I might remark at this point, with SARS, persons working on the front line of health care, I want to be on the record publicly for thanking them, specifically the people working at Lakeridge Health and all of the hospitals associated with Lakeridge Health, which includes three in my riding: Oshawa General Hospital, the old general hospital in Lakeridge, the Port Perry community hospital as well as the Bowmanville hospital—who care for us from the minute we are born to the last breath we take, are all members of the broader public service whose salaries are paid by our government, through the taxes of all hard-working Ontarians in this great province.

I think it's important to realize that none of these things could happen without a government that's able to generate wealth. The wealth we've been able to generate in the last eight years as the government is due to encouraging a strong economy that allows us to enjoy the standard of living that we all share in this great province.

To illustrate why the motion for interim supply must be passed with expediency, it would perhaps help if I

outlined some of this government's spending commitments. Our government has an agenda of spending on those priorities that respond to the needs of Ontarians and encourage growth, job creation and prosperity. These priorities are health care, education, the environment and of course, more importantly, the infrastructure going forward.

Let's look at how supporting the motion for interim supply will benefit two of these priorities that I'll just discuss briefly: health care and education. Ontarians want and deserve a health care system that they can count on when they need it for themselves and for their families. We are making significant investments to meet our commitment of improving and modernizing Ontario's hospitals to better meet the needs of the citizens of this great province.

In 1995, Ontario was spending \$17.6 billion annually on health care. This year, Ontario will invest \$27.6 billion in health care, an increase of almost \$10 billion since this government took office in 1995. This record level of funding for health care includes specific items such as additional funding to continue to support residents in long-term-care facilities and to continue the expansion of long-term-care beds. That's the 20,000 long-term-care beds as well as the 16,000 retrofit modernized beds.

Many of the most frail senior citizens reside in our long-term-care facilities. To provide them with the additional nursing care and assistance they need, our government is providing an additional \$100 million annually, bringing year-over-year increases to this area alone of \$400 million. It also includes almost \$200 million for payments to physicians and other practitioners, including primary care renewal. I applaud the nurses and nurse practitioners who have made this great commitment during the time of SARS to make health care available to people where and when they need it. It includes almost \$200 million to cover higher utilization of Ontario drug programs and \$193 million for diagnostic and medical equipment upgrades and replacement. I know this commitment includes my riding, more specifically the CAT scan in the Bowmanville hospital. This include equipment upgrades and replacement.

Hospitals are central to our health care system. In 2003-04, Ontario will provide \$10.4 billion to support hospitals. In addition, we will provide an additional \$130 million one-time funding for diagnostic and medical equipment, which will bring the total grants to hospitals to \$10.4 billion. This is a 10% increase over the 2002 budget.

To meet these health care spending commitments, we must ensure that a new motion for interim supply be in place before this legislative session recesses.

We have also made significant commitments to education in Ontario, because a quality education is primary. For the last 10 or so hours, the Minister of Education, the Honourable Elizabeth Witmer, has been attending before the estimates committee, which I'm part of, and I'm pleased to report that in my riding in each and every case the school boards have received additional funding. If I

could just bring you up to date on education funding, it started at \$12.862 billion dollars. With what has been concentrated here in the student-focused funding model, post-Rozanski we have a commitment by the minister of \$15.325 billion to public education. I'm pleased to say that that funding includes special funding for technical education training which has been announced in my riding.

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I believe that all the investments we make in education pay a dividend down the road, not just for our children today but for our lifestyle tomorrow. There's always more to be said on education. I believe that the people of Ontario know that this government's record is very strongly in support of quality education, accessible, available public education, with accountability for our students and our teachers. More importantly, this government has to take the stand that education is the pathway to the future. With that, I'll leave the rest of the remarks to our very able House leader.

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I was listening very carefully to the remarks of the Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs on interim supply. She of course said that the Conservative Party made tough decisions and that essentially they made the right choices. I would argue that, yes, in this interim supply they made tough decisions, but they didn't make the right choices. Why do I say that? Because essentially there is a fundamental difference between the Conservatives and the Liberals in terms of how we perceive government. What is the difference? First of all, has the government the right to be the defender of the public good or do we take the government to be simply a night watchman in the old days, looking around with a lantern to see that everything is OK in the old city? There is a fundamental difference here.

The minister said very clearly, "Do you know what? We want to give back to the people as much money as possible, because they know how to spend it." Who would disagree with that? Who would disagree with giving back money to the people, because it was hard-earned and they certainly have the right to make the decision on how to spend it? We'd all agree with that. There's definitely no doubt about that.

But at the same time, you have a responsibility to do the responsible decision-making that essentially you were elected for. It is not responsible for you to not give enough money to schools, to hospitals, to roads, to drinking water, to children's services, and the litany goes on and on.

Here we are: the difference. On this side, we believe in this fundamental choice, and that is that Liberals think that we are and would be the public defender of the public good. In other words, we have the responsibility to make sure there are no holes in our roads; we have the responsibility to make sure there is no gridlock; we have the responsibility to ensure that our drinking water is safe and clean and that our families are not in danger. We have the right to ensure with public money that the

Ministry of the Environment has enough inspectors. We have the right to ensure that our schools are properly funded.

When I go to the schools in my area I'm ashamed, and so should you be. There are some older schools in the older parts of our cities that have broken windows that are taped over with some plastic or cardboard because the windows have fallen out. We have a responsibility to make responsible choices to ensure our kids go to good schools, have good textbooks, have good teachers, have places where they can go swimming, have places where there are community centres. Do we have the right to expect that from the government, or do we just run around with the old lantern and see, well, nobody got killed today, so therefore everything seems to be OK and forget about the gridlock, forget about our schools and forget about our safe drinking water?

You know I'm speaking the truth. You have to give back money to the people, of course, but at the same time, it was your government that said, "We don't have enough money to give people back a tax credit for private schools." Wasn't it Ernie Eves who said that? Wasn't it he who said, "We couldn't afford it"? Was it not he who said you couldn't afford it?

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): No.

Mr Ruprecht: I hear a no on the other side, and that is not the truth. The truth was, there was not enough money because he had back-pedalled and he said we couldn't afford it. So that's the truth. We're simply saying on this side of the House that a responsible choice would be to do equitable funding, that there should be enough money to the schools so that our kids get the best education possible, but you haven't done that, unfortunately. You haven't done that.

When I look at our roads today in my part of town in Toronto, I would be ashamed to have a visitor come, take a car and go across these roads, including some of the potholes of 401. I know Mr Kormos is driving down the highway with his big—what's he driving now? Is it a Lincoln Town Car?

Interjection.

Mr Ruprecht: He's got a motorcycle, right, with his brown boots. If he is—

Interjection.

Mr Ruprecht: Never mind if he's speeding on the highway. Don't let me even get excited about this because, do you know what? It is the Premier's name on the signs on these highways, and even those highways are not properly maintained. Even those highways have big holes in them. But should Mr Kormos be as unlucky as to drive over one of these potholes with his motorcycle, he'd be dead. He'd be dead.

Hon Mr Turnbull: You're as phony as your doctoral title.

Mr Ruprecht: I'll just not even listen to the comment the honourable member made. It has no relevance to this point.

I'm just simply saying to you, Mr Turnbull: fix the roads. You've got the power to do it. Stop your limo, get out there and look at the roads and fix the roads, fix the gridlock and do something about transportation in this city.

Hon Mr Turnbull: We did.

Mr Ruprecht: It is not true. Fix the roads. That's what we're asking you to do. And fix the schools while you're at it. Fix the schools.

Interjection.

Mr Ruprecht: The point is simply being missed. As a defender of the public good, you have responsible choices to make, and one of the responsible choices has been that the budget you claim does not have a hole in it of \$2 billion—I'm asking you, how will you make up the difference? Where will you take \$2 billion from to have a balanced budget? I'm hearing nothing. Two billion dollars is missing unless you sell some of our provincial lands; if you sell the properties that we have in the province of Ontario, you can't make up the difference. You're fooling yourself if you think that there is no \$2-billion hole in the budget.

You haven't told us what you will do, how you will spend and how you will get the \$2 billion back to fix up that hole. We're asking that question today, and we do not get an answer.

What concerns me even more is the condition of our schools, especially as it relates to private schools, because the government has now made a decision that will put up to \$3,500 into the pockets of parents who send their kids to private school. We've already withdrawn \$2 billion from the public system. If we continue with the private tax deduction for tuition fees, \$3,500 per child, we're going to have a major, major problem.

What concerns me again is this: will there be monitoring in the private schools where parents can now send their children? Is there going to be a monitoring system in place? Private schools can hire teachers who have no accreditation under this system of the Conservative government. There will be no education ministry official who will check out the curriculum. There will be no one required to administer the standardized tests that the public school students face. This is a massive difference. This is a fundamental difference that this government is introducing. We're asking you today: if you are proposing to give a tax credit which will eventually grow to \$3,500 per child per year, if you're providing a tax credit, how will you monitor the private schools? It's not in the bill.

This government has much to do. We're asking today and we're concerned, along with the Ontario Human Rights Commissioner—his name is Keith Norton, as you know. He has expressed alarm about what could happen. He's warning us all. This scheme of this government—and the truth is that Keith Norton, of course, has been a former government member. In fact, he has been a minister of a Conservative government. It is not coming from the Liberal benches; it is coming from a former minister of the Conservative government, who is saying

to you and warning you that this scheme of the Conservative government "has the potential to result in racial, ethnic and religious apartheid in our educational system, as well as intolerance and ignorance." That, he says, will in fact happen.

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I'm asking this government, if the human rights commissioner, Keith Norton, is expressing alarm to this degree, what is the answer that you're providing me, without your laughter and your congenial remarks? Be serious for once and answer the question that the human rights commissioner is asking you. Give me some feedback where you can in all seriousness say to me, "Do you know what? We're not concerned about the tax credit scheme, we're not concerned about monitoring the private schools, and we're not concerned about \$3,500 per child for this tax credit scheme." What is your answer to that? There is no answer. I hear no answer.

Interjection: We didn't hear the question.

Mr Ruprecht: You know what the question is because I repeated the question twice. There is no answer. Therefore, you should really be ashamed of foisting this system on to the taxpayer and on to the educational system in Ontario. You should hang your heads in shame. Without a monitoring system, how can you produce a bill that doesn't do what our public school system is required to do?

So it is clear. We're looking at our education critic, Gerard Kennedy, who says that 42 new private schools opened last year alone and that the enrolment has risen by 50% under the Tory watch.

Interjection: A success, eh?

Mr Ruprecht: That's a success all right, but at the same time you must understand that our school system is more than simply a factory for learning. It is a system that has produced first-class citizenry in proposing and in educating the masses of our ethnocultural groups that come from all over the world. They come into one classroom, they get to know each other, and they therefore take a great educational experience back home because they get to know and to understand different cultures.

So it is clear: this kind of system that is in the private schools will not have the kind of educational requirements or the kind of educational experience we've had in the past. You're destroying that. You're destroying a fundamental principle of giving every student in Ontario the right to be exposed to a multicultural and a multi-racial experience. You're taking that away from our students. You're giving a right to every tribe to have his or her own school so that they can be all together by themselves and consequently not have the experience that others will have. That is a right that every student should have in the province of Ontario.

Finally, let me simply say this, which concerns me a great deal. We've had some reports by Statistics Canada in the newspapers, reports that have been very, very interestingly analyzed. It says in this newspaper article alone that the poverty rate among immigrants who have arrived here in Canada within the last five years is now

36% under your watch. Do you know what it was 10 years ago? It was 24.5%. This shows a tremendous difference. This shows that the more education a new Canadian has when he or she comes to our shores, the less likely they are to succeed and get a proper job and the less likely they are to become taxpayers, to participate and purchase our goods. Again, this is an issue that is of grave importance because it shows there is a different priority.

Their priority should be to take new Canadians and make taxpayers out of them as soon as possible, to make them productive citizens as soon as possible. That is to say that the public has to spend money in our school systems so that the new students and their parents get an educational experience that not only proposes that they will be good civic taxpayers but that they will also be citizens who pay taxes. The point is simply this: when people come to this county, they have been promised that they will be able to get a job, especially when they're highly educated. They come to Canada, and what do they find? They find that some of the doors are closed. The facts speak for themselves. I'm not making this up. This is a census by Statistics Canada. I'm not making this up or using flowery words. These are the facts. Under your administration, the poverty rate for new Canadians has increased by more than 12%.

You should be asking yourselves what you're doing wrong and what you could do to improve a system that will permit new Canadians to enter the workforce as soon as possible. But what you have done is something unheard of in any other western county: you've taken away the finances and the right, basically, of people to enter our schools and have English-as-a-second-language programs. You should invest more money in our school system so that people will be able to speak English as soon as possible. Without English, no one can enter the workforce; without English, no one can find a job; without English, you certainly can't understand an educational process. The point is to ask yourselves how you can help people when they come here to enter the workforce. The Conservative government has taken away the Ontario Welcome Houses.

Interjection.

Mr Ruprecht: Thank you. At least I'm getting through to some of you. Ontario Welcome Houses were designed so there would be someone there when new immigrants were coming in to help them find their way around to schools, to jobs and to a way so that they could make a new life in a new country. You've taken that away. That is very important.

Let me just make a final remark. You have a responsibility to ensure that you're also serving the public good, and that our fundamental difference between the night watchman of the Conservative Party and the defender of the public good, which is the Liberal Party—if that concept goes through your heads, you'll see that you have to spend some money so that new Canadians are able to work and find a better taxpaying life faster in this country.

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): I had to enter the chamber this evening believing that I'd have an opportunity to speak to the supply motion. However, my colleague Mr Gerretsen and the member for Niagara Centre have raised, I think, some very important points about the appropriateness of this motion. They would present that while the motion might be in order in this House, it is in fact the wrong motion, that the government has put the wrong motion for debate. I don't know how the minister could make such a mistake. We have precious little time in this chamber and we have very important work to do. I believe that the supply motion is one of the most important motions that we deal with. It provides the agencies of the government with the ability to pay the bills when we're not sitting. That's what it does, and it would appear that the minister has put the wrong motion to us. So we're spending a lot of time in this chamber paying attention to a motion that will not, in fact, do what the government intended it to do. I am also aware that the government is aware of it too. They know that they've made a mistake. I don't know how the minister could introduce a motion that isn't going to help them.

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My House leader has received a memorandum. This was June 20. That was four days ago. It was very clearly explained in a memo from the government House leader that the changes to the legislation and the regulations—and I do remember the minister, in her opening remarks, speaking specifically to the fact that the government has gone to a new accounting system. It's gone to an accrual system. That has required some adjustments to the supply motion.

The government House leader has provided a memo to the other House leaders—the House leader for the opposition and for the third party—that in effect states that the changes to the legislation and the regulations were administrative in nature and maintain long-standing principles of appropriation, supporting the existing financial framework and appropriation mechanisms.

The recommended wording is as follows. In order that the government can now achieve supply, provide supply to its various ministries, the wording was changed to that the crown be authorized to incur expenditures relating to the salaries of civil servants and other necessary matters pending the voting of supply for the period commencing April 1, 2002, and ending on September 30, 2002, such expenditures to be charged to the proper appropriation for the 2003-04 fiscal year following the voting of supply.

The memo goes on to explain the wording of the motion that we are in fact debating tonight. The background is that, effective the fiscal year starting April 1, 2003, legislative spending authority and appropriation control are on an accrual basis of accounting. In the 2002 Ontario budget bill, Keeping the Promise for Growth and Prosperity Act, Bill 109, the government introduced amendments to legislation that converted legislative spending authority and appropriation control to the

accrual basis of accounting. The printed estimates—that is, the legislative spending authority and appropriation controls—are now on the same basis of accounting as other financial documents and reports, which provide for more transparency, especially for the members of the Legislature and the public.

The amended definition of “appropriation” in section 1 of the Financial Administration Act is as follows: “‘appropriation’ means an authority to pay money out of the consolidated revenue fund or to incur a non-cash expense.”

So on February 3, 2003, cabinet approved the regulations, prescribing six non-cash expenses, of which three are voted and the other three are statutory. The three voted non-cash expenses are the reduction of a prepaid expense, a loss on the disposition of a capital asset, and imputed interest on a loan bearing interest below the prevailing market rate.

Interjection.

Mrs Dombrowsky: Minister, I’m trying to clarify why I believe the motion that we are debating, in my opinion, will have no effect at the end of the night. Your minister introduced the wrong motion. I’m explaining why the motion that was introduced, that we’ve spent time on here this evening, is not in order and will have no effect.

For those of us who sit in this House and read all the documents that are here in our desk, that might be very clear. But I think it’s very important for the public record, for anyone who might be watching these proceedings on television, to understand and be very clear about the kind of mistake that you have made tonight.

You are in charge of all of the finances of the province of Ontario. You have come here this evening—we were supposed to be debating a supply motion. The motion that is on the table, by the advice of your own council, will not have the effect that you want it to have, because you introduced the wrong motion. The people of Ontario, I think, should be very clear about the fact that we have very important business to do here, and you can’t get it right. This is a very serious problem.

I know that other good members of this Legislature tried to bring this to the attention of the minister, to no avail. That’s really unfortunate, because there were a lot of issues around supply that do impact constituents of mine. In my riding there are many issues that I wanted to highlight. We know that when we come to the chamber to debate supply or to speak to a motion on supply, it is an opportunity to highlight those areas where we think some of the plans of the government are deficient in terms of supplying the needs of the people in our community. I know in my own riding there are many areas—and I’m hearing from people across the province, particularly with regard to my critic portfolio.

The government would suggest that they have some history in balancing budgets. There are very learned people in the financial field who would suggest that in fact the budget is not balanced, that there’s one major \$2-billion hole that the government simply turns away from,

winks at and pretends isn’t there. But the people who deal with finances on a very regular basis will not ignore it, and will speak out and tell the people of Ontario, “Don’t be fooled. The budget’s not balanced.” It’s been suggested that we’re going to receive \$2.2 billion by selling provincial assets, but they won’t tell us what assets are being sold.

With regard to supply and with regard to issues in my riding and across the province, I find it interesting that they would suggest they’re balancing budgets. Many of their transfer agencies would like to say the same, but this government hasn’t been giving them the resources that they need to do that. Children’s aid societies across Ontario are running deficits. They have been told to max out their lines of credit. Is that the way to provide essential services to the most vulnerable children in our society, to say to their agency, “You know, if you need money, you should go to the bank. Use your line of credit,” and hope that the government’s going to cover it at the end of the day or the end of the month or the end of the year? There’s a real worry out there that they’re going to go so far into debt—and it has happened, in fact—that the banks are saying, “No. Sorry, but you’re at your maximum.” The government is then forced to come up with some money. That’s no way to run a business, no way indeed.

They talk about their fine accounting principles. What do they leave for their transfer agencies? What do they leave for their hospitals? How many hospitals in this province have deficits because they are underfunded? It’s very easy for the members of the government to say, “Oh, we’ve balanced the budget,” when all of their transfer agencies are starving for cash; they are in debt; they are in deficit situations; they are cutting services. The hospital corporation in the community that serves my riding, Quinte Health Care Corp, is in fact considering laying off nurses as part of its cost efficiencies.

So I would say to this government, which put a supply motion forward, that there are many, many areas in the province in which you can talk about balanced budgets, but they’re balanced only because you’re starving the transfer agencies of your government that need those dollars.

Another example in my riding is the fact that the VON in Kingston, that has served the community for 106 years, is on the verge of folding, collapsing, because they can’t afford to provide the service. The Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington CCAC doesn’t have money to increase the compensation packages for the community health providers. It has created a climate of great uncertainty in health care. This government comes into my community and they talk about all they’ve done, while the people in the riding are saying, “There’s something wrong when agencies like VON, that have provided quality community health services for 106 years, are forced to fold. There’s something very wrong with that.” So I am making comment on the minister’s remarks earlier about what this government has done and how they perceive what they’ve done has been good for the

province. I'm suggesting that there's another side to that. I have some responsibility, as an elected representative, to share with you those things which I hear on a very regular basis that are not working well.

2040

We heard just this week that the Family Responsibility Office is seriously, seriously understaffed. What's the result when those sorts of agencies are understaffed? It means that families and children are not getting the money they are entitled to, that they deserve, to the tune of \$1.3 billion. There is a serious need in the Family Responsibility Office.

I just want to go back to the original point I was making about the motion we're debating tonight. It's the wrong motion. There is very serious concern that, in fact, at the end of this day, this government will not be able to do what it intended to be able to do, what it should be able to do at the end of a supply motion, and that is pay for the supply of the services that the government provides to the people of Ontario. While I know that the table has ordered that the motion is in order, it's the effect of the motion that is in serious question here this evening. I commend my colleague Mr Gerretsen and also the member from Niagara Centre, who I think have very ably explained the problem that we have before us here this evening. It is indeed regrettable. We assume that a government that is in charge of managing almost a \$70-billion budget knows—they should know, they've been doing it for eight years—how to run the business of this province. But, you see, they change the rules—they're good at that; they do it all the time—and then they get caught by changing their own rules. I think that is in fact what has happened here this evening.

I do hope that the people of Ontario are paying attention to this and I hope that they're maybe a little bit concerned, as we are on this side of the House, that we have a government that likes to pat itself on the back for doing everything right. They run away from any kind of blame, and here tonight I think they've made a very serious error. I really question whether or not we will be able to pay for the supplies of the province at the end of the day.

Hon Frank Klees (Minister of Transportation): I just want to make it very clear to the members of this House that I believe this is a motion that deserves the full support of every member here and I certainly intend to support it.

Mr Christopherson: Just by way of an update, as I understand things with 56 and 57, indeed, the House leaders of the opposition were correct that it was the wrong motion to call, but the enterprising lawyers in the Ministry of Finance—and I remember many of them—think they have found a way to make this work. Make no mistake, the government still did call the wrong motion, and both of the opposition House leaders were indeed correct in pointing that out.

In the short time that I have, I want to begin by commenting on a couple of the remarks that the Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing made, some-

one who actually is a very good speaker and who I think understands things quite well. It's a shame that she persists in reading things word for word, because at this point she doesn't need the crutch. I know that she wants to stretch as a parliamentarian and as a minister, and that would be a good start.

Nonetheless, she read it word for word, and one of the phrases that was in there spoke to the "fundamentals" being "sound." It's interesting, because if anyone who's a fan of John Kenneth Galbraith—and I am—reads his works, he goes on at great lengths, particularly when he does the analysis of the crash of 1929, to caution everybody that in the future, if you hear a finance minister or someone speaking on behalf of a government and they start talking about the fundamentals being sound, that's when you should start worrying. Indeed in that speech the government was talking about the fundamentals being sound, and the reality is that the fundamentals of this province are not sound—not by a long shot—not if you measure things in terms of the quality of life for the vast majority of the citizens of Ontario.

Another thing the minister said was that they needed to pass this interim supply because they needed the authorization to pay out social assistance benefits "to those in need." The phrasing, "to those in need," suggests that they care about those who are in need. What they don't talk about, even though they have lots of time to brag about tax cuts, they have lots of time to talk about the tens of thousands of dollars—and millions, if you include the corporate and the personal income tax that Frank Stronach is going to get from this budget, the measures of this government—is that if you take a look at people who are in need, the lowest-income earners, the lowest-income receivers in the province, are people on social assistance. I want to point out that half of those people—half—are kids. They're children. People on social assistance in the province of Ontario woke up in June 1995, a few days after that election, to find out that their income had been cut by 21.6%.

I've been a part of the discussions about MPPs' pay increases from day one, and I was one of those who stood behind the notion that the then Integrity Commissioner, Evans, would be tasked with reviewing all that. And I was one of those who also acknowledged, and was prepared to say, that I thought an increase was due. I thought most of it, as it's going to, should take place with the next Parliament, because we shouldn't benefit from our own votes, but put it in place for the next Parliament, that if you agree that that's the money you should get, run on and stand on it, and if not, say so, and then say you won't take it and then don't take it.

My point in raising that is, I remember very well—I'm not going to name names, so everybody can calm down, I wouldn't do that, but I do remember the discussions with honourable members on all sides of the House, and there was an awful lot of engagement and concern and passion and tenacity around that issue. Fair enough. I'd just like to see a fraction of that applied to the people that the minister referred to as "those in need," because that

21.6%, I'm told by people who are good at these calculations, amounts now to the equivalent of a 30% cut. So when we talk about all the benefits that have been accrued by certain segments of the population as a result of this government's budgets for eight years, let's remember that it doesn't include those in need, it doesn't include those children who are in need. You know, it seems to be in modern-day Ontario politics that there's no appetite among the public to hear a lot of these things.

A politician's first reaction, then, is, "Don't speak to it; speak to things that the public are interested in and engaged in, things that are vote determinants."

2050

But at some point, and maybe it happens late in the day when virtually no one is watching and no one in the House is paying a lot of attention and we're all doing our work at our desk, maybe that's the only time it can come up. Somewhere in all this, when the Frank Stronachs of the world are getting richer and richer, somebody's got to stand up and say that you can't keep standing up and mouthing the words that you care and saying things like, "This bill will allow us to pay out the social assistance benefits to those in need," and try to convey a whole lot of compassion and caring and meanwhile go to a cabinet meeting every Wednesday and do nothing about it.

Some of those kids are hungry. Some of them have got, I grant you, lousy parents. Guess what? Lousy parents come in all shapes and sizes and all income levels. Just because you make a lot of money, that doesn't make you a good parent, and just because you're poor, that doesn't make you a bad parent. But the fact of the matter is that it's children who are in poverty to start with, and not only have you done nothing to alleviate that poverty, you've made it worse.

I said at the time and I'll say it again on my way out the door, which is coming within a few weeks, it will be seen as one of the darkest periods in the history of this province, first of all that you did it, that you took a majority government and the first thing you did was to cut the income of the poorest of the poor. The second shame is that the people of Ontario let it happen.

Obviously, things haven't changed an awful lot, because there's nothing in this budget to correct it, not even a modest increase or a modest announcement, something to give action to the minister's words when she said "benefits to those in need." I have no doubt that the minister has a great deal of compassion, but she also has a lot of power and authority right now and could do something. That applies to every other minister and, quite frankly, every member of this House but particularly the government cabinet ministers who have a direct say in exactly what happens in this province.

I would just say that it's a shame to sit here after this length of time and still hear ministers stand up and say that, and yet the reality is that those kids' circumstances get worse and worse with every passing month and every passing year. Now they're living with the equivalent of a 30% cut. The other reason I raised the MPP thing is that so many people don't want to talk about welfare; they

don't want to about it any more. All those negative stereotypes kick in. I've got to tell you, I don't care how many of those stereotypes may or may not be true; the fact of the matter is we're talking about kids in poverty. In my opinion, it's wrong to stand up as a minister of the crown and talk about wanting to help those in need when we've got a budget that we debated this afternoon that does nothing about it. I notice that not one of those ministers is looking at me.

The minister also mentioned their SARS relief dollars. I just wanted to bring to the attention of the House a constituent of mine; I obviously won't mention his name, but the circumstances are interesting and I've made his case, as his elected representative, to the Premier and the Minister of Health. It's interesting because I suspect there are a lot of other people who are in similar circumstances. Those circumstances are these: the SARS relief dollars are for those who lost income or who had to pay out extra money as a result of being quarantined during the SARS crisis. My constituent was not one of those citizens. However, my constituent's circumstances are that he was scheduled for major surgery that was expected, upon his recovery, to allow him to go back to work so that he could once again be a productive member of society.

His surgery was cancelled because there wasn't the surge capacity. We've all learned now what that means, that the surge capacity in our health care system has been lost. That meant that when the SARS crisis hit, there wasn't the buffer to deal with it and let the regular operations of the health care system continue. It was all hands on deck, and everything had to be let go that could possibly be let go that wasn't life and death, and those health care professionals were redirected over to deal with the SARS crisis.

When that happened, my constituent was one of those whose surgery was cancelled—the night before—because everybody had to leave everything. He'd already done all those preparations that you often have to do for operations, and everybody has an idea what those are. He was all ready, and the very night before he got the phone call, the surgery had been cancelled. It's still cancelled. It's not rescheduled. His life, as he wants it to be and as his family wants it to be and, quite frankly, as it deserves to be for him as a citizen, is on hold. He's making the case, "I was impacted by the SARS crisis as well as anyone who was quarantined. Is there no relief for me?"

It's a good question. I'll bet there are an awful lot of people across the province who are also once removed, but you can still make the direct connection. I would hope it's something the government would look at in terms of the implementation of their SARS relief plan.

Earlier this afternoon, Speaker, we were talking about the budget. Indeed, you were in the chair as a matter of fact. Now that we're talking interim supply, both measures of course allow quite a broad range of discussion. Speakers tend to allow a lot of latitude. The rules allow for a lot of latitude, so this gives me a great opportunity—it's almost the same amount of time, too. I can

pick up where I left off and make a few more of those points I want to make, because they apply just as well to interim supply debate as they would to the budget bill.

One of the things I wanted to raise this afternoon, in addition to all the others I talked about, is the fact that this budget does absolutely nothing for licensed child care—again, children. The minister responsible is in the House. This budget doesn't do an awful lot for kids. I guess Frank Stronach's kids will be better off, because there will be an even bigger inheritance. Beyond that, I'm not sure what good all this is going to be for the parents in my riding of Hamilton West who want, need and deserve licensed child care—not a word.

Affordable housing: every one of us who lives in a major urban centre lives with the blight of having homeless people on our streets. For us here at Queen's Park, it's hard to go from here either to your office if you're a Toronto member or to your apartment if you're an outside member without passing people who are homeless. A homeless person died a few years ago just across the street from where we are. We hear stories about Washington, DC, as an example, where right across the street from the White House are teams of people who are homeless, living in the parks, living in the streets. You ask yourself, those of us who are not residents of the US, "How can that be right across the street from the White House, the seat of the most powerful elected position on the planet?" Sometimes you just need to see things as they happen closer to home to understand how that is, because we live it right here, right across the street. You can almost throw a stone from where I'm standing right now to where that person died.

Homelessness has been declared a national emergency. I know in the city of Hamilton, because of the downloading, just the thought of trying to maintain and keep in proper repair the existing stock of social housing, affordable housing, is an incredible challenge. The ability to tackle the homelessness problem and the whole issue of affordable housing in one of the wealthiest societies in the world is beyond the means of most municipalities. Certainly it's beyond the means of Hamilton city council to deal with it in any kind of adequate fashion.

2100

Earlier this afternoon, I talked about a report that had been published by the provincially funded organization, the Institute for Competitiveness and Prosperity, headed up by Mr Roger Martin, who's the dean of the Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto. In fact, Mr Runciman, when I mentioned his name, said, "Good guy." I'll take him at his word; I'm sure he is. As I said this afternoon, he's probably a very smart guy.

What did that report say about the relationship with municipalities? It speaks very directly to the finances of this province and the lack of adequate prioritizing. The report said, "We believe that Ontario has opportunities to increase our productivity in our city regions, but that our cities are handicapped by significant economic, fiscal, and political barriers to closing the prosperity gap."

We've heard from a former federal finance minister who's likely to become the next Prime Minister, if you

follow all the reports. We've got the TD Financial Group that came out a year ago, and we also have the report from the alliance—not that Alliance—the alliance here in Toronto. I believe it's entitled Enough Talk.

All those reports I'm referring to, and the former federal finance minister, have said that municipalities cannot possibly meet the challenges that they're facing in terms of affordable housing, in terms of infrastructure, public transit, environmental challenges, virtually everything across the board. They can't do it. As much as this government might like to say it's the fault of the councils because they can't manage their money, which is basically what you've said over the years, more and more there's a body of evidence you can't ignore that makes the case that municipalities are being financially strangled.

Let me tell you, it is impossible to have a healthy, vibrant, successful Ontario if we don't have healthy, vibrant, successful municipalities. You can't do one without the other. The budget, the spending plans of this government, do nothing about that. As we predicted years ago, the government stands up, puffs itself up and says, "We cut taxes and we balanced the budget, and we did this, that and the other," paying absolutely no attention to the damage they've done to the major transfer partners that had their funding cut so you could stand up and say these things.

Before I forget, the Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing also, interestingly, after some comments I and others made this afternoon about balanced budgets, got up and did exactly what I predicted the government would do—not that it took any kind of brilliance on my part to see it coming. One just has to hang around here long enough and you can see this kind of stuff coming, but sure enough—she wasn't in the House this afternoon—the minister stood there this evening and said, "Five balanced budgets." When I heckled that they aren't really, the minister got very testy, very upset and totally dismissed what I was saying, as this government frequently does with people they don't agree with.

The same minister—it's interesting, because I said that ministers would do this. This afternoon I said they would do it, and here they were doing it. The minister would talk about Standard and Poor's in a light that made them look good, completely ignoring the fact that it was Standard and Poor's that said you didn't have a balanced budget last year and you're not on track to have a balanced budget this year. Standard and Poor's said that, and if you recall just a few hours ago, when I was rhetorically asking the government, "How are you going to respond to that?" their ultimate answer was: "Standard and Poor's is wrong. They're wrong."

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): The Tories are always right.

Mr Christopherson: We've had this on every occasion. When they've got nothing else to argue with, nothing else to say and no other way to justify their position, they turn on whoever is saying it. They merely look over and

say, "You're wrong." Yet almost in the same breath, the minister was taking credit for something Standard and Poor's had said about the government. You can't have it both ways.

Let's also understand, any of us who were here before when the now government was over here, that if Bob Rae had tried to claim five balanced budgets in a row and Standard and Poor's came out and formally said, "In our opinion, there was no balanced budget last year and there's no balanced budget projected for this year," we'd never have gotten away with even attempting to say, "Standard and Poor's is wrong and we are right." Yet that's exactly what you've done here today: you're right, and everybody else is wrong.

It's like the education system: the teachers are wrong, the students are wrong, the trustees are wrong, the public is wrong, the parents are wrong; everybody's wrong except you.

Mr O'Toole: Look at the time.

Mr Christopherson: I'm not the only one running out of time, John.

Everybody's wrong except them. You know, you can only play that game for so long. Eventually it catches up with you. That's what we're starting to see, and that's why I think you can't get the bounce that you want in terms of the polls. You wanted to go in the spring. The numbers weren't there. SARS came along, and it was a great fig leaf. One could argue the merits of whether you should or shouldn't have gone if you had the numbers. Nonetheless, it worked out fine and gave you a nice little bit of cover.

But you didn't call the election, because you don't have the numbers. You came out with a couple of measures that really don't fit into any kind of overall economic strategy or short-, medium- or long-term plans for the future of the economic health of this province. It was merely a question of: "Let's do the polling. Let's do the focus groups. Let's find issues that will move people, because we've got to move the poll numbers."

But I have to tell you, I want to say very sincerely to the government, I think that no matter what you do, you're going to have a really difficult time as a party. I know. I've been where you are. Individually, some of you who have laid down really strong roots, those who have a history of serving the community and have a very good reputation among virtually everybody—like my friend Mr Arnott and others who have done the same sort of thing—probably have a really good chance of surviving. But for a lot of you, I have to tell you, when that tidal wave hits, you're going with it, and it is, in large part, because these things are all catching up with you. You can't keep doing what you've been doing on a sustained basis and not expect that at some point the public will begin to understand the difference between what you say and what you do.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, Government House Leader): I'm pleased to rise and to speak to the interim supply motion.

There has been a bit of a discussion about the two motions which appear on the order paper. Interim supply is two things. Firstly, it's a bill that leads to the main Supply Act. It's not simply a motion, but an act. It's also a general motion rooted in parliamentary tradition to authorize the government of the day to make certain expenditures. It's not just for the salaries of the civil servants, though more than 100 years ago the salaries of public servants would be the principal payments required. Obviously, it also covers, as the motion that we're dealing with talks about, "other necessary payments pending the voting of supply." Of course, we'll vote on supply, and it's traditionally normally done at the end of the fall sitting in November or, more likely, December.

2110

This motion before us is the traditional motion. It's one which, as very learned followers of parliamentary tradition will tell you, has been used for decades in the province. This motion has some status in this chamber. It isn't a routine motion that can be made during routine proceedings before question period, and neither is it a motion that requires an extensive amount of debate and someone either putting the question or a motion to bring in closure. It's a motion of tradition, rooted in parliamentary tradition, to say that the members of the Legislature assembled here at Queen's Park consent to the government's paying for the salaries of the public service and other necessary payments.

Over the past 100 years, there have been likely dozens, if not hundreds, of changes in accounting standards and approvals. I would strongly suggest that the changes brought forward in the recent 2002 budget, where we went to accrual accounting from simple payments under cash, are covered by the interim supply motion, because it's not the definitive expression of Parliament's support; rather, it's an interim expression of the people of Ontario as represented by their members assembled here at Queen's Park. Accruals, of course, as you know, have been included in the estimates, but they're not part of necessary payments and their relationship to accrual.

So I think the debate here tonight has been one of inside baseball. The traditional parliamentary motion and the special status that the interim supply motion has certainly enjoys a tradition here and is a general motion rooted in parliamentary tradition. It in no way will limit the authority of the bill that this Legislature will deal with later in the year, whether it's in this Parliament or the following Parliament.

I think it's important that this House consent to payments being made for hospitals, for our school boards, for our seniors' residences, for those organizations, those transfer payment agencies that deal with people with developmental disabilities. It's important that the Minister of Finance have the authority, through the consolidated revenue fund, to cut cheques on the consolidated revenue fund for shelters in the case of violence against women, for measures to police the environment, for law

enforcement, for a variety of activities. This vehicle is, of course, that resolution, that expression of public support to do just that. There could in this interim supply be a great debate with respect to the word "incurred." Of course, if you're accruing, there's no payment, and I think it's somewhat of an inside baseball.

I would, if there's any debate, place my confidence and my trust in the practice of this Legislature going back many years and quite comfortably do so. This House has had the opportunity to debate the budget motion presented by the Minister of Finance. We had a good amount of debate on that. This House has had the opportunity to debate three bills with respect to the budget. Normally we only have a spring budget bill and then a fall budget bill. The government presented all three up front; a different practice.

We've had a significant amount of debate on two of those pieces of legislation. On two of them, in fact, we'll have the opportunity to conduct an important part of the debate, which is making a decision. Making a decision, standing up in your place, voting and being counted is an important part of the process on Bill 43 and Bill 53. We'll have occasion in the next number of days to give an expression on two important bills: the equity in education tax credit, a bill to say that parents who send their children to an independent school have some support in doing that, and that we recognize and acknowledge that support.

I was really impressed with Monte Kwinter, who had the courage of his convictions to stand up in his place and support that legislation. I don't think that could perhaps be said for his seatmate, the member for Scarborough-Rouge River. It was pretty gutsy for the member for Scarborough-Rouge River to do that. He supported the government and then indicated in lightning speed that he in fact didn't support that.

What I was surprised by is that the member for St Paul's, after saying, "You can't suck and blow on the same issue"—of course, that's a term which goes back to the Roman days and poetry in years past; I checked it out to make sure what its origin was—the member for St Paul's has proven that you can do both of those activities at the same time. He stood up and voted against something that he had spoken in favour of.

We'll certainly get a definitive judgment on two bills. We're going to have the opportunity this week to debate more budget bills and to debate the fall budget bill in the spring, having more debate on the budget in the spring than we've perhaps ever had in the province of Ontario.

I know my friends in the NDP will be surprised because, in a majority of cases, they didn't even vote on the provincial budget. The member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound is here, and I know he was shocked when the NDP didn't even get their budget passed by the Legislature, let alone presenting all the budget bills.

I say to my friends in the Liberal caucus that they brought in an aviation fuel tax and never got legislative authority. Five years went by, and they never got legislative authority. Another five years went by under the

NDP. They never sought legislative approval to levy that tax. Thank goodness we had a finance minister in Ernie Eves who put that into legislation. Speaker, I know that you are thankful for that as well.

I should say that I appreciate your comments in the House, Mr Speaker. You were a real gentleman to acknowledge the work that we had done with respect to consumers in a certain community in northern Ontario. We're tremendously pleased that that solution was able to be addressed.

I'm looking forward to seeing if the members on the other side of the House want to stand up and support our hospitals, our school boards and our organizations that help people with developmental disabilities. I look forward to seeing if they're going to stand and be counted.

The Acting Speaker: This completes the time allocated for debate.

Mrs Molinari has moved government notice of motion number 57. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2119 to 2129.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Guzzo, Garry J.	Murdoch, Bill
Baird, John R.	Hardeman, Ernie	Mushinski, Marilyn
Barrett, Toby	Hastings, John	Newman, Dan
Beaubien, Marcel	Hodgson, Chris	O'Toole, John
Chudleigh, Ted	Jackson, Cameron	Runciman, Robert W.
Clark, Brad	Johns, Helen	Sterling, Norman W.
Coburn, Brian	Johnson, Bert	Stewart, R. Gary
Cunningham, Dianne	Kells, Morley	Tascona, Joseph N.
DeFaria, Carl	Klees, Frank	Tsubouchi, David H.
Dunlop, Garfield	Marland, Margaret	Turnbull, David
Elliott, Brenda	Martiniuk, Gerry	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Eves, Ernie	Maves, Bart	Wilson, Jim
Flaherty, Jim	Mazzilli, Frank	Witmer, Elizabeth
Galt, Doug	McDonald, AL	Wood, Bob
Gilchrist, Steve	Molinari, Tina R.	Young, David
Gill, Raminder	Munro, Julia	

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Crozier, Bruce	Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Bountrogianni, Marie	Dombrowsky, Leona	Levac, David
Boyer, Claudette	Duncan, Dwight	McLeod, Lyn
Caplan, David	Gerretsen, John	Patten, Richard
Christopherson, David	Hampton, Howard	Prue, Michael
Cleary, John C.	Hoy, Pat	Ramsay, David
Conway, Sean G.	Kormos, Peter	

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 47; the nays are 20.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

ONTARIO ENERGY BOARD
CONSUMER PROTECTION
AND GOVERNANCE ACT, 2003
LOI DE 2003 SUR LA PROTECTION
DES CONSOMMATEURS ET LA RÉGIE
DE LA COMMISSION DE L'ÉNERGIE
DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 18, 2003, on the motion for second reading of Bill 23, An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 and the Municipal Franchises Act in respect of consumer protection, the governance of the Ontario Energy Board and other matters / Projet de loi 23, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario et la Loi sur les concessions municipales en ce qui a trait à la protection des consommateurs, à la régie de la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario et à d'autres questions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Pursuant to the order of the House dated June 23, 2003, I'm now required to put the question.

On June 16, 2003, Mr Baird moved second reading of Bill 23. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2132 to 2137.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour will please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Guzzo, Garry J.	Munro, Julia
Baird, John R.	Hardeman, Ernie	Murdoch, Bill
Barrett, Toby	Hastings, John	Mushinski, Marilyn
Beaubien, Marcel	Hodgson, Chris	Newman, Dan
Chudleigh, Ted	Hudak, Tim	O'Toole, John
Clark, Brad	Jackson, Cameron	Runciman, Robert W.
Coburn, Brian	Johns, Helen	Sterling, Norman W.
Cunningham, Dianne	Johnson, Bert	Stewart, R. Gary
DeFaria, Carl	Kells, Morley	Tascona, Joseph N.
Dunlop, Garfield	Klees, Frank	Tsubouchi, David H.
Elliott, Brenda	Marland, Margaret	Turnbull, David
Eves, Ernie	Martiniuk, Gerry	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Flaherty, Jim	Maves, Bart	Wilson, Jim
Galt, Doug	Mazzilli, Frank	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gilchrist, Steve	McDonald, AL	Wood, Bob
Gill, Raminder	Molinari, Tina R.	Young, David

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Crozier, Bruce	Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Bountrogianni, Marie	Dombrowsky, Leona	Levac, David
Boyer, Claudette	Duncan, Dwight	McLeod, Lyn
Caplan, David	Gerretsen, John	Patten, Richard
Christopherson, David	Hampton, Howard	Peters, Steve
Cleary, John C.	Hoy, Pat	Prue, Michael
Conway, Sean G.	Kormos, Peter	Ramsay, David

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 48; the nays are 21.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

ONTARIO ENERGY BOARD
CONSUMER PROTECTION
AND GOVERNANCE ACT, 2003
LOI DE 2003 SUR LA PROTECTION
DES CONSOMMATEURS ET LA RÉGIE
DE LA COMMISSION DE L'ÉNERGIE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mr Baird moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 23, An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Act, 1998 and the Municipal Franchises Act in respect of consumer protection, the governance of the Ontario Energy Board and other matters / Projet de loi 23, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario et la Loi sur les concessions municipales en ce qui a trait à la protection des consommateurs, à la régie de la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario et à d'autres questions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Pursuant to the order of the House dated June 23, 2003, I'm now required to put the question.

Mr Baird has moved third reading of Bill 23. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2142 to 2147.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour will please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Guzzo, Garry J.	Munro, Julia
Baird, John R.	Hardeman, Ernie	Murdoch, Bill
Barrett, Toby	Hastings, John	Mushinski, Marilyn
Beaubien, Marcel	Hodgson, Chris	Newman, Dan
Chudleigh, Ted	Hudak, Tim	O'Toole, John
Clark, Brad	Jackson, Cameron	Runciman, Robert W.
Coburn, Brian	Johns, Helen	Sterling, Norman W.
Cunningham, Dianne	Johnson, Bert	Stewart, R. Gary
DeFaria, Carl	Kells, Morley	Tascona, Joseph N.
Dunlop, Garfield	Klees, Frank	Tsubouchi, David H.
Elliott, Brenda	Marland, Margaret	Turnbull, David
Eves, Ernie	Martiniuk, Gerry	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Flaherty, Jim	Maves, Bart	Wilson, Jim
Galt, Doug	Mazzilli, Frank	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gilchrist, Steve	McDonald, AL	Wood, Bob
Gill, Raminder	Molinari, Tina R.	Young, David

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Crozier, Bruce	Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Bountrogianni, Marie	Dombrowsky, Leona	Levac, David
Boyer, Claudette	Duncan, Dwight	McLeod, Lyn
Caplan, David	Gerretsen, John	Patten, Richard
Christopherson, David	Hampton, Howard	Peters, Steve
Cleary, John C.	Hoy, Pat	Prue, Michael
Conway, Sean G.	Kormos, Peter	Ramsay, David

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 48; the nays are 21.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, Government House Leader): Because I want to help seniors get a break on their property taxes, I call order G43.

ONTARIO HOME PROPERTY
TAX RELIEF FOR SENIORS ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR L'ALLÈGEMENT
DE L'IMPÔT FONCIER RÉSIDENTIEL
POUR LES PERSONNES ÂGÉES
DE L'ONTARIO

Mr Baird, on behalf of Mrs Ecker, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 43, An Act to provide Ontario home property tax relief for seniors / Projet de loi 43, Loi prévoyant un allègement de l'impôt foncier résidentiel pour les personnes âgées de l'Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Pursuant to the order of the House dated June 11, 2003, I'm now required to put the question.

Mr Baird has moved third reading of Bill 43. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

I have received two notes, pursuant to standing order 28, that the vote be deferred to deferred votes tomorrow afternoon.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, because I believe in the equity in education tax credit, I call order G53.

THE RIGHT CHOICES FOR
EQUITY IN EDUCATION ACT
(BUDGET MEASURES), 2003

LOI DE 2003
SUR LES BONS CHOIX POUR L'ÉQUITÉ
EN MATIÈRE D'ÉDUCATION
(MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Mr Baird, on behalf of Mrs Ecker, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 53, An Act respecting the equity in education tax credit / Projet de loi 53, Loi concernant le crédit d'impôt pour l'équité en matière d'éducation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Pursuant to the order of the House dated June 17, 2003, I am now required to put the question.

Mr Baird has moved third reading of Bill 53. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

I have received a note from the chief government whip requesting that the vote on this bill be deferred until tomorrow during deferred votes.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

This House will now adjourn until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 2152.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon James K. Bartleman

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
Ancaster-Dundas- Flamborough-Aldershot	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Marie (L)
Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Christopherson, David (ND)
Beaches-East York	Prue, Michael (ND)	Hastings-Frontenac- Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Leona (L)
Bramalea-Gore-Malton- Springdale	Gill, Raminder (PC)	Huron-Bruce	Johns, Hon / L'hon Helen (PC) Minister of Agriculture and Food / ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation
Brampton Centre / -Centre	Spina, Joseph (PC)		Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée	Kenora-Rainy River	Gerretsen, John (L)
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Education / vice-première ministre, ministre de l'Éducation
Burlington	Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)		Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC) Minister of Public Safety and Security / ministre de la Sécurité et de la Sécurité publique
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Lanark-Carleton	Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Don Valley East / -Est	Caplan, David (L)		Wood, Bob (PC)
Don Valley West / -Ouest	Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Associate Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation / ministre associé de l'Entreprise, des Débouchés et de l'Innovation	Leeds-Grenville	Mazzilli, Frank (PC)
Dufferin-Peel- Wellington-Grey	Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture / président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement, ministre de la Culture
Durham	O'Toole, John R. (PC)		Sampson, Rob (PC)
Eglinton-Lawrence	Colle, Mike (L)	London West / -Ouest	DeFaria, Hon / L'hon Carl (PC) Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Affaires civiques, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Elgin-Middlesex-London	Peters, Steve (L)	London-Fanshawe	Marland, Margaret (PC)
Erie-Lincoln	Hudak, Hon / L'hon Tim (PC) Minister of Consumer and Business Services / ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises	Markham	
Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L)		
Etobicoke Centre / -Centre	Stockwell, Chris (PC)	Mississauga Centre / -Centre	
Etobicoke North / -Nord	Hastings, John (PC)	Mississauga East / -Est	
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)		
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)		
Guelph-Wellington	Elliott, Hon / L'hon Brenda (PC) Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services / ministre des Services à la collectivité, à la famille et à l'enfance		
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)		
Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Hodgson, Chris (PC)		
Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)		

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Nepean-Carleton	Baird, Hon / L'hon John R. (PC) Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, government House leader / ministre de l'Énergie, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones, parlementaire du gouvernement	Scarborough Southwest / -Sud-Ouest	Newman, Hon / L'hon Dan (PC) Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre associé de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Niagara Centre / -Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Alvin (L)
Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)	Simcoe North / -Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)
Nipissing	McDonald, AL (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Minister of the Environment / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines, ministre de l'Environnement
Northumberland	Galt, Hon / L'hon Doug (PC) Minister without Portfolio, chief government whip / ministre sans portefeuille, whip en chef du gouvernement	St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)
Oak Ridges	Klees, Hon / L'hon Frank (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	St Paul's	Bryant, Michael (L)
Oakville	Carr, Hon / L'hon Gary (PC) Speaker / Président	Stoney Creek	Clark, Hon / L'hon Brad (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Oshawa	Ouellette, Hon / L'hon Jerry J. (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles	Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh	Cleary, John C. (L)
Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Ottawa-Orléans	Coburn, Hon / L'hon Brian (PC) Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs	Thornhill	Molinari, Hon / L'hon Tina R. (PC) Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre associée des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	McLeod, Lyn (L)
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Oxford	Hardeman, Hon / L'hon Ernie (PC) Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre associé des Affaires municipales et du Logement	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
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Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Sorbara, Greg (L)
Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC) Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances	Waterloo-Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC)
Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Whitby-Ajax	Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation / ministre de l'Entreprise, des Débouchés et de l'Innovation
Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Willowdale	Young, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Windsor West / -Ouest	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
Sault Ste Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)	Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Dwight (L)
Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)	York Centre / -Centre	Kwinter, Monte (L)
Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)	York North / -Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)
		Mississauga West / -Ouest	Vacant

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Raminder Gill, Pat Hoy, Morley Kells, Rosario Marchese, Ted
McMeekin, Bill Murdoch, Wayne Wettlaufer
Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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Fourth Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Quatrième session, 37^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 25 June 2003

Mercredi 25 juin 2003

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 25 June 2003

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 25 juin 2003

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): The quality of a government can be judged by the priorities that it puts on spending taxpayers' dollars. Every day, this government faces the question, do we spend the money on seniors or do we spend it on partisan ads? Should we spend the money on textbooks or should we spend it on partisan ads? Should we take some of the taxpayers' dollars and spend them on affordable housing or should we spend them on partisan ads? Should we use the money to give ODSP recipients their first increase in 12 years or should we spend it on partisan ads?

What about a citizen on ODSP who requires a special diet to maintain their health and indeed to stay alive? Should we spend the money on that or should we spend it on steak dinners for ourselves?

I would like to tell you about a constituent, not of mine but of another member, who requires a very special diet for pancreatic enzymes. She knows she needs it, her doctor knows she needs it, and in fact ODSP knows she needs it. ODSP has indicated that because of this diet she requires to stay alive, they will give her \$250 a month for this special diet. The difficulty is that the diet costs \$410 a month.

I need advice, I guess, from the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services. Should she not eat on weekends? Should she eat the first half of the month and not the second half? Or perhaps the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services should look at the budget and say it is worth \$160 to keep a citizen of Ontario alive, and should fund the diet at the rate she needs to stay alive.

SENIORS' MONTH

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): It is my honour, on the occasion of Seniors' Month, to celebrate and pay tribute to the people who built Ontario into the great province it is today.

Seniors are living longer, healthier lives than ever before. It is time that we cast aside all stereotypes of retirement as a quiet time in a rocking chair. Today,

seniors are contributing more hours of community service than they did while working and raising their families. Annually, seniors volunteer the highest number of hours of any age group.

Many seniors pursue sports and leisure activities to keep fit and enjoy the company of others. On June 20, when I attended the awards ceremony of the Mississauga Seniors' Games, I talked with amazing seniors who swim or play tennis every day.

Seniors are also making an effort to stay healthy. There was an excellent turnout for the Healthy Living Expo, sponsored by the Mississauga Board of Chinese Professionals and Businesses, which launched Seniors' Month in Mississauga.

Our government wants to help seniors remain in their homes as long as possible by reimbursing the education portion of their property tax. The many seniors living on reduced retirement incomes will welcome this tax relief, which will occur when Bill 43 is passed into law.

To all our seniors we say, you are setting wonderful examples as you continue to share, care, teach and lead in so many ways. Thank you for creating communities and a living environment that are the envy of the world. You will always be our heroes.

INSURANCE RATES

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): Martin Beaudry writes in the Insurance Journal, "Auto insurers put the brakes on risk in Ontario." He reports, "Capacity is down, insurers are refusing new business, and those lucky enough to be insured are at risk of losing their coverage should anything happen."

Jim Thomson of the Timmins-based brokerage BMT Insurance says, "We are at a crisis now where people can come in off the street and I don't have a market for them."

The article goes on to say, "Insurers are using 'predatory' practices to clean up their book of business. They are culling their databases to identify people they want to get rid of. What they do is send a letter 45 days prior to your renewal, and they don't tell the broker. If you don't complete that form and send it back to them, you are automatically cancelled."

I have a memo to the brokers of a major insurer that is headed, "Reasons for Declination." This list gives brokers instruction on 89 reasons to decline new and renewal business. Not one reason is given why they should be insured.

Whatever happened to company loyalty—loyalty to both brokers and the insured? What is the Ernie Eves government doing to assure that companies don't just dump loyal brokers and insureds? What's the Ernie Eves government doing about insurance? Nothing. Absolutely nothing.

ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): And the government should adopt public auto insurance. That would deal with the issue. We New Democrats are moving in that direction.

I want to bring to the attention of the House something that is a disaster beginning to happen across this province, and it's in the area of addiction services. It turns out that we haven't seen an increase in the budget for addiction services over the last 10 years, other than a 2% increase last year.

As a result of the funding shortfall on the part of this provincial government, we now have situations such as we have in Smooth Rock Falls, where the Cochrane detox centre is having to close its doors for one month in order to balance their budget this September. They're in a situation of having to say, "We will take no new intakes for the month of September in order to balance our annual budget." I say to the government that we need to deal with this, and we need to deal with it fast.

In talking to people in addiction services, it turns out it's not just the Cochrane detox centre that's in that situation; we have detox centres across the province that are facing similar kinds of situations because of inadequate funding of addiction services on the part of this government.

Further to that, La Maison Arc-En-Ciel in Opatatika, which has not had an increase in its budget in a number of years, other than that 2%, is facing similar crises.

We're calling on this government to do the right thing and fund addiction services to the degree they need to provide these important services to the people of Ontario.

1340

HIGHWAY 410

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): On Monday, I was pleased to take part in a very special announcement in my riding of Brampton Centre with Premier Eves, Minister of Transportation Frank Klees, Peel Regional Chair Emil Kolb, Brampton Mayor Susan Fennell and my colleagues Tony Clement and Raminder Gill.

Finally, after years of delays and bureaucratic stalling, the residents of Brampton are getting the news they've been waiting for: the extension of Highway 205—sorry, that's actually Highway 410. We call it 205 because it was only half completed by the NDP. This is great news for Brampton, as it will reduce gridlock and improve traffic safety in Brampton-Caledon, as well as attract new investments and new opportunities. How important is this

project? The 410 carries over 100,000 commuters a day and nearly \$325 million worth of goods.

This is a good partnership, supported by the region of Peel and the city of Brampton to better serve the citizens of Ontario. Taxpayers expect governments to work together, and this is a prime example of how it did.

I want to thank all for their hard work in making this promise a reality: Transportation Minister Frank Klees for cutting through the red tape and giving final approval to the project; former Minister Sterling, who moved the yardsticks on this project forward; and Mr John Pappain, a man who was instrumental in the negotiations with landowners that made Monday's announcement possible.

Thank you to Metrus and the Brampton Board of Trade for their leadership and pressure to bring this matter to the forefront. I thank you all, for the residents of Brampton.

BSE

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): The Minister of Agriculture just doesn't get it. The magnitude and diversity of our beef industry demands broad consultation to deal with the BSE crisis.

The minister claims to be working with the OCA. Well, the OCA wrote the minister last Friday, "We are requesting that your ministry take the lead in forming an oversight committee that will not only work toward the betterment of the current program but also take a proactive approach." They ask for inclusion of representatives from the Ontario Livestock Dealers' Association, the Ontario Livestock Auction Markets Association, the veal and sheep associations and the Dairy Farmers of Ontario. These voices must be heard and listened to.

Ross McCall, president of the livestock dealers, says, "They just don't understand the magnitude of the problem and what it could blow into. The minister doesn't realize the importance and urgency of getting money into producers' hands."

Len Gamble is the owner of Brussels Livestock, in the minister's own riding. He markets over 170,000 head per year. He says, "The minister should be listening to the grassroots of the industry and the everyday farm public to find out what is going on. That's just not happening."

Our exporters and our dairy industry have been virtually ignored by this ministry. The minister must sit down and meet with these people immediately.

I'm calling on the minister once again to do what it takes to save the industry—the entire industry. Forty per cent is a minimum contribution to the program. The province has the ability to enhance and expand the program, and if that's what it takes, the minister should show some leadership and get on with it and get behind the ruminant industry in this province.

PHARMACARE

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): The Ontario government allows, through legislation, the ability for

pharmacists to waive the \$2 copay for Ontario drug benefit recipients. The government encourages discounting of pharmacy fees, yet the same provincial government has not granted an increase to their professional dispensing fee in over 13 years.

In order to compete, many pharmacists have waived their patient copay. Others have chosen to use loyalty programs like the Shoppers Drug Mart Optimum card, which provides value to their customers. Loyalty programs provide valuable benefits to consumers and patients and have done so in this province since 1999.

Every province but Quebec allows the public to collect loyalty points on the full value of a prescription—a significant benefit, particularly to low-income earners. However, on June 16 this year, the Ontario College of Pharmacists reversed this policy, prohibiting the awarding of loyalty bonus points or air miles on prescriptions, prescription services and professional services related to pharmacy in Ontario. This policy now discriminates against pharmacists', seniors' and consumers' best interests.

Loyalty and bonus points should be treated in the same way that the government is treating the waiving or charging of the copay. This should be a business decision by pharmacists for their consumers. I call on the Minister of Consumer and Business Services to end this discriminatory practice in Ontario. This decision to prohibit loyalty and bonus programs in this province is a bad deal for pharmacies and a very bad deal for Ontario consumers.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): It's been one crisis after another for Ernie Eves and his government. He's had a full year of sitting in the big chair and he still doesn't know how to manage the province of Ontario. He still doesn't have any ideas about how to fix our hospitals or crumbling schools or dirty air, other than to turn off your barbecue.

Ernie Eves thinks it's more important to play golf in Arizona than to deal with the SARS crisis. Ernie Eves thinks it's okay for ministers to funnel expenses through private corporations. He also seems to think it's okay for cabinet ministers to tell ever-changing stories about their European junkets. This is the same Ernie Eves who is starving our public health system of dollars so they can't combat the West Nile virus effectively. This is the same Ernie Eves who tried to secretly give a sports camp in his own riding a \$700,000 retroactive tax break. This is the same Ernie Eves who has left the province on the verge of energy blackouts.

Let me read what the Toronto Star has to say about this government: "Clearly, the Conservatives, first under Mike Harris and now under Ernie Eves, are spending more time in their second term helping their friends, their own ridings and individuals and private companies who have donated to Tory coffers than they are in managing the affairs of this province. All are signs of an arrogant,

tired regime that has run out of fresh ideas and has fallen into the morass of pork-barrel politics at its worst."

Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals have fresh ideas to fix our hospitals, our schools, and clean up the air we breathe and the water we drink. We're tired of Tory pork-barrelling. We need a change. Dalton McGuinty will bring about that change and will work for the people of Ontario.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): Community safety continues to be a priority of our government. Ontario residents not only have the right to be safe but also to feel safe in their communities.

I was pleased to be a part of a cheque presentation to the York region police on Monday. York region police have been given \$1,323,999 to pay for police officers, to fund anti-drinking and driving campaigns and to fight youth crime. This includes \$1.2 million given to the community policing program to cover the cost of 79 new front-line officers. They also received \$20,500 to pay for the overtime of police officers working on the Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere, RIDE, program, which operates in York region year-round. We gave \$15,250 to the youth crime and violence enforcement program. The Partners Against Crime also received a \$19,000 grant.

Under the terms of the community policing partnership program, eligible police services received provincial cost-share funding up to \$30,000 annually from the province to pay the salary, benefits and overtime of officers hired under the program. Currently, 998 of the original 1,000 officers allocated are on active duty in police services throughout the province. Since 1996, we have doubled RIDE grants to \$1.2 million per year as part of a five-year enhancement program. Reducing crime, getting drunk drivers off the roads and offering better options to young people to steer them away from crime are tangible programs that will make a difference in York region and in my riding of York North.

MEMBERS' EXPENDITURES

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I beg to inform the House that today I laid upon the table the individual members' expenditures for the fiscal year 2002-03. I believe that members will find copies inside their desks if they wish to review them.

VISITORS

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: As a former warden of the great county of Simcoe, currently the chairman of the ex-wardens' association, I'm really pleased to have our former warden, our ex-wardens, our current warden, His Worship George MacDonald, their spouses and friends here, visiting us from the beautiful county of Simcoe

today. I'd ask that you please give them a warm round of applause.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): We welcome our honoured guests.

1350

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to introduce the House to members who are here today from the police foundation. There are 15 young people who are studying to be police and law enforcement officers. They are here to study our Legislature with their instructor, Mr John Papadakis. I welcome them to the Legislature.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: One of our pages, Brittany Shaw, from my riding, has done a very good job here. I know everybody has been impressed with what she has done. I would like everyone here to welcome with me today her mother Rita Shaw, her father Steve Shaw and her brother Derek Shaw in the gallery.

MEMBER FOR STORMONT- DUNDAS-CHARLOTTENBURGH

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: There is one other former warden of a county who is in the Legislature today. He's actually on the floor of the Legislature. This will possibly be his last day in this House as a member.

John Cleary has represented his constituents since 1987 with great distinction, a very long career in his community, a number of volunteer activities. He's been a friend and colleague to members on this side of the House since 1987. He was elected in 1987, re-elected in 1990, 1995 and 1999. The people of Cornwall and the surrounding region owe him a tremendous debt of gratitude. Those of us in the Liberal Party salute his outstanding achievements as a member in his work in his community and here at the Legislature.

I think I speak on behalf of all members when we say to you, John, thank you for your distinguished service to your community, your province and your country. Our best wishes go to you and your family as you enter a new stage of life.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I want to join with the House leader in saluting Mr Cleary, their member for Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh. Mr Cleary has served here at Queen's Park. He has served his community and he has served his party, but he has also served this chamber. He has done it with dignity, he has done it with grace and he has done it with a sincerity and integrity that are beyond question and beyond reproach.

I want John and his community to know that it's not just his Liberal colleagues at Queen's Park who appreciate his presence for so many years; indeed, it's every member of this chamber. His courage in addressing issues that others wouldn't address singles him out. That alone, at the very least, singles Mr Cleary out as an

exceptional member, and the quiet but effective manner with which he gets things done.

So I want this chamber, Mr Cleary and his community to know that New Democrats regret his leaving. New Democrats also appreciate and understand the opportunities that creates for New Democrats. We will do our best, but his tenure here at Queen's Park is one of which Mr Cleary and his community can be very proud. Our personal relationships with Mr Cleary will always be the subject matter of fond memories. Our respect and regard for Mr Cleary will, I believe, carry on long after he leaves this chamber and moves to yet another stage of his life, which I'm sure will be as busy and fully occupied as his years here at Queen's Park.

We salute you, Mr Cleary. We wish you well and look forward to seeing what you're going to be doing with a little bit more free time in this next stage of your life. I want you to know that you can go back home with great pride in your own right for good service, integrous service, courageous service and effective service.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, Government House Leader): I'd like to briefly join my two colleagues and the House leaders from both parties on behalf of my caucus and the government to thank John for the tremendous contribution that he's made to Ontario, particularly to eastern Ontario. John is quiet but incredibly effective. There are two members of provincial Parliament whom he's defeated over the years. I think there are only a handful of members in this place who can say they defeated not one member but two.

He's someone who has worked hard and forcefully brought forward the interests of his constituents. He doesn't get up and rant and rave in the House like all of us on both sides of the House do, but he regularly comes up to you after question period with a letter directly bringing forward the concerns of a constituent. The people of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh have had a quiet but effective and hard-working man on their community's side for the past 16 years. I'd like to join all members, particularly being a neighbouring constituency, in thanking him on behalf of not just the people of Cornwall and Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh but in fact people from all over eastern Ontario and the province. Congratulations.

Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I know you're probably in the same boat that I'm in. You're leaving too, and I guess we have many regrets.

I know in my four terms here at Queen's Park I've made great friends with members on all sides of the House. I know that every member, no matter what party you belong to, you come here to make Ontario a better place to live and to represent your constituents.

I've been elected, municipally and provincially, non-stop since 1971. I know that I've never promised anyone anything. I've always told them what I thought should be done and I worked to that goal.

When I first ran for municipal council and was past warden—I think I have some good friends behind me here somewhere. I was the warden in 1983. When I first ran, my oldest daughter had just become a teenager. Now she's a grandmother. That tells you something.

I know my family feels that I put my constituents ahead of the family sometimes. Anyway, that's just the way it was.

I would like to also thank my colleague from the Liberal party, Mr Duncan, for his kind remarks, and my colleagues Mr Kormos and John Baird.

I know that it wasn't easy to quit, but the family put on a 50th wedding anniversary for us last year, and they told me that was it. They said if I decided to run again, they were all going to work against me.

Anyway, to get back to what Peter said: you know, Peter, we had your party representing our area for some 15 years before I came along. I happened to be the Conservative who was in there in a minority government. But anyway, they've had their turn there.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): John, is it our turn again?

Mr Cleary: I don't know.

I just want to also say that I've had great constituency staff and riding association volunteers. They're the ones that make the member, because they're the ones that bring things forward.

Anyway, I wish every member of the Legislature well. I know you're all here for the same goal, and I hope you can achieve your wishes. I guess that it's time for me to sit down and say thank you.

Applause.

1400

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ONTARIO HERITAGE
AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LE PATRIMOINE DE L'ONTARIO

Mr Tsubouchi moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 124, An Act to amend the Ontario Heritage Act /
Projet de loi 124, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le patrimoine
de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The Chair for a short explanation?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture): It will be in ministers' statements.

ITALIAN HERITAGE DAY ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LE JOUR
DU PATRIMOINE ITALIEN

Mr Agostino moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 125, An Act to make December 12 Italian Heritage Day /
Projet de loi 125, Loi visant à faire du 12 décembre le Jour du patrimoine italien.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): Today, over 700,000 people of Italian descent thrive and live in Ontario. Some have been established since the first major wave arrived in the late 1880s, and some are recent immigrants. Ontario citizens of Italian descent continue to make a significant contribution to the cultural and economic growth of Ontario and Canada.

On December 12, 1901, the world-renowned Nobel Prize physicist Guglielmo Marconi received in St John's, Newfoundland, the first transatlantic wireless signal from his transmission station in Cornwall, England. This was one of the most important developments in human history, allowing communication across much greater distances and permitting people anywhere in the world to communicate with each other. Marconi's efforts were the precursor of radio, the Internet and other communications tools that are present in our everyday lives. The efforts of Mr Marconi should be recognized through Italian Heritage Day here in Ontario.

ELECTRONIC WASTE PRODUCER
RESPONSIBILITY ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LA RESPONSABILITÉ
DES PRODUCTEURS DE DÉCHETS
ÉLECTRONIQUES

Ms Churley moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 126, An Act to ensure that the producers of electronic equipment retain responsibility when their products become waste /
Projet de loi 126, Loi visant à assurer que les producteurs de matériel électronique sont toujours responsables lorsque leurs produits deviennent des déchets.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I apologize, Speaker; I sent a copy of the second environmental bill, which I'll be introducing later.

This bill requires producers of electronic equipment to implement a program for ensuring environmentally sound collection, treatment, recovery and final disposition of discarded and obsolete electronic equipment. Landfilling and incineration of electronic wastes are prohibited. I'm bringing this bill forward because there's been an explosion of electronic equipment going into our

landfills, and it is creating a lot of hazards to our water and land.

INVESTMENT TRUST
UNITHOLDERS PROTECTION
FROM LIABILITY ACT, 2003
LOI DE 2003 SUR L'IMMUNITÉ
DES DÉTENTEURS D'UNITÉS
DE SOCIÉTÉS DE PLACEMENT

Mr Hastings moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 127, An Act to protect unitholders in investment trusts from liability / Projet de loi 127, Loi prévoyant l'immunité des détenteurs d'unités de sociétés de placement.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): The purpose of this bill is to protect unitholders in investment and royalty trusts from liability in their capacity as unitholders.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND THE
ENVIRONMENT BRANCH ACT, 2003
LOI DE 2003 SUR LA DIRECTION
DE LA SANTÉ DES ENFANTS
ET DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT

Ms Churley moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 128, An Act to establish the Children's Health and the Environment Branch of the Ministry of the Environment / Projet de loi 128, Loi créant la Direction de la santé des enfants et de l'environnement au sein du ministère de l'Environnement.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): The children of Ontario have a right to a clean and safe environment. As children grow and develop, they are particularly vulnerable to environmental hazards, so I believe there should be an ongoing means by which children are protected from those hazards, to ensure that they grow up healthy. What this bill will do is require the Ministry of the Environment to establish a children's health and environment branch by January 1, 2004.

1410

VISITORS

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Beside my colleague Tony Ruprecht in the west members' gallery is Dermot Lynch, who is the business representative of district council 46 of the International Union of Painters and Allied Workers. Welcome, Mr Lynch.

Hon Carl DeFaria (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to welcome seniors from across the province who are here to witness the vote on Bill 43, the seniors' tax credit bill.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to take a moment to introduce four students of democracy from the Free Flamborough group, who have arrived here today. Welcome.

Hon Tina R. Molinari (Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to introduce some members in the gallery who are here to witness the vote on Bill 53, the equity in education tax credit. I will start with the Thornhill constituents: Frank Dimant, who is the executive director of B'nai Brith; Larry Zeifman, who is a parent of children in the education system; and Rabbi Israel Janowski, also a Thornhill resident.

The others here today: Rochelle Wilner, president of B'nai Brith; Pearl Gladman, director of communications for the community action committee; Anita Bromberg, legal counsel for B'nai Brith; Carla Lancit, editor of the Jewish Tribune; Aaron Blumenfeld; Corrine Korzen, who is our candidate for the Eglinton-Lawrence riding; and Robert Samery, who is chair of the Jewish Parents for Equality in Education Funding.

I'd like everyone to join me in welcoming them here today.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture): I'm delighted to speak today as the Minister of Culture. The Ernie Eves government values and is committed to conserving Ontario's heritage for the enjoyment and benefit of present and future generations.

This is the first government since the introduction of the Ontario Heritage Act in 1975 to bring forward substantive amendments to the act. Ontario has the oldest heritage legislation in Canada, but is the only province that does not have the legislative tools to recognize and protect properties of provincial significance.

The current statute is not strong or flexible enough. It promotes subjectivity of application. It is also out of step with land use planning legislation, resulting in conflicting and inconsistent ground rules for property owners. A stronger Ontario Heritage Act would provide more tools and more flexibility to protect local and provincial heritage and would make Ontario one of the leading jurisdictions in heritage conservation.

We made some changes to the act through last fall's Government Efficiency Act. After holding extensive con-

sultations led by my parliamentary assistant, Julia Munro, we heard that stakeholders supported these amendments and welcomed the opportunity to make additional changes.

We listened to our stakeholders, and the changes we are introducing today are based upon what we heard. The following amendments to the Ontario Heritage Act are consistent with this government's Smart Growth initiative, making responsible choices that allow us to maintain a high quality of life while our communities grow.

For example, the powers to designate provincially significant built heritage: sometimes a building is of provincially or national importance and is at risk and the province has no authority to intervene to protect it. All other provinces have this power. Like the minister's zoning orders under the Planning Act, this power would be used sparingly and as a last resort.

Standards and guidelines for identifying and protecting provincially owned heritage property that is deemed provincially significant: my ministry would develop these standards and guidelines in consultation with affected ministries and agencies. We would take into consideration their capacity to implement them. For example, the standards and guidelines could be phased in.

Increased protection for significant marine heritage sites: this amendment builds on the important work undertaken by my colleague Toby Barrett to protect marine heritage. We would be regulating access without a licence to about a dozen of the most fragile marine heritage sites such as those containing human remains—for example, the 1812 warships Hamilton and Scourge.

Standard designation criteria and other improvements to the municipal designation process: we would develop the designation criteria in consultation with other ministries, municipalities, developers and heritage stakeholders. Standard criteria would help ensure quality control and consistency in designations while allowing municipalities to interpret and apply the criteria as appropriate to address local needs.

Measures to streamline and strengthen the protection of heritage conservation districts: for example, we would require districts to have a plan in place to help ensure better and more consistent management of changes in the district.

Updated and streamlined agency provisions for the Ontario Heritage Foundation and Conservation Review Board: the name of the Ontario Heritage Foundation would be changed to the Ontario Heritage Trust to better reflect its mandate to hold heritage properties in trust for all Ontarians. We would also update the Conservation Review Board powers to make them consistent with those of other regulatory tribunals.

These amendments to the Ontario Heritage Act would help build strong communities by promoting civic pride, cultural tourism and local economic development. Most of all, our government's commitment to the preservation of our province's heritage would improve the quality of life for all people in Ontario.

On a personal note, I might say that some of these things come to us in all of our communities. For exam-

ple, in my community of Markham, a designated property, a historical property called the Wideman house, was destroyed overnight. That caused great outrage, not only in me but also in members of my community, as it was considered a cost of doing business.

We have a responsibility to protect our heritage sites for future generations. Once we lose them, we lose that opportunity. This is our opportunity; so I hope that all members of this House, including the opposition parties, will support this bill, because I think it will be to the benefit of our children and our grandchildren.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Responses?

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): Although we all know that for eight long, dark years we have had absolutely no movement and no progress when it comes to culture and heritage in Ontario, on the eve before the House is to rise, we now have a bill before us with some amendments. I have to say it's clear by the actions of Mike Harris as Premier and then Ernie Eves as Premier that the Conservatives unfortunately have portrayed a level of indifference and have also rendered the cultural and heritage community in this province irrelevant and treated them with irrelevance. I say this because it is the cultural ministry that was decimated more than the environment ministry. That is where the priorities of the government are. So as much as I have a great deal of respect for the minister, unfortunately he belongs to a government that has shown no leadership and no understanding of the value of heritage and culture in Ontario.

Just as late as about a month ago, the Ontario Historical Society had to take the government to court to protect some cemeteries and burial sites. This is the second time. They had to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars fighting the government to protect a historical site. That was just a month ago. So you'll have to excuse me if I do not applaud, the day before the House is to rise, a movement to protect our heritage.

I have to say that the Ontario Liberals understand that we need a new Ontario Heritage Act. This was known for many, many years, and yet eight years have gone by and nothing has been done. Do you know what the difference in values is? This is fundamentally the difference between the Conservatives and the Liberals: that we understand that the legacies, the tradition and the history that give us a sense of belonging and pride in the place we live must be protected. I don't understand why now, on the second-last day before the House is to rise, we are supposed to believe they mean what they say, because nothing has been done in action.

1420

I have to also say there's enough tinkering and enough tweaking. Ontario needs fundamental change. We need fundamental change in values of heritage and culture that are going to make our cities vibrant and give communities vitality. What have we done over the last eight years? I hear it from all types of groups and organizations: they have been cut back, they have stopped giving their programs, and schools teach less and less

Ontario history. That goes fundamentally to the heart of the values of who we are as a society.

We're still fighting for the first Parliament building. There is still no secure protection for cemeteries and burial grounds. Again I say, the current government has no credibility on this file: eight years of regressive erosion and lots of our built heritage torn down. It is offensive to the community that the day before the Legislature is to rise, we have a bill before us with little or no chance of passing.

I have to say again that the people of Ontario are not fooled by these tactics. That's all they are. The heritage community has told me they've had no ear of the government, very little dialogue. At the very least, the government that is in power today has shown disrespect and disregard for the heritage and cultural community in the province of Ontario.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): This is one of the first cultural initiatives presented in this place that I can remember in a long time, and I have to say that it falls very, very short of our expectations and, I assume, very short of the expectations of the heritage community.

Minister, you say in your presentation that you are committed to conserving Ontario's heritage. You also say it's the only province that does not have the legislative tools to recognize and protect properties of provincial significance. You make it appear that through this bill you will be protecting heritage sites. But in my cursory review, unless I'm wrong, there is nothing here that will prevent a single heritage building from being demolished. There is no power for municipalities to say no to demolitions. That's one of the requests I made in the bill I presented here quite some time ago. Unless municipalities have the power to say no to the demolition of our heritage sites, I'm not sure what this bill does to preserve our heritage buildings, although you claim, incidentally and by way of suggestion, that you will be able to protect our heritage buildings. You will not be able to do it.

You also give no incentives to the owners of heritage properties to preserve them, which was another request I made in the bill I presented, as a way of encouraging people who own heritage sites to preserve them. We believe they need incentives, and there's nothing in your bill that does that for the preservation of our buildings through the incentives you could give those owners so we could save buildings.

There's also nothing here that will save the first Parliament. Minister, it has been two years that people like me and my friends from Toronto-Danforth and particularly from Beaches-East York have been lobbying you and the previous minister to save the site of our first Parliament. I was looking forward to your making this announcement today. That's what I thought our brief chat yesterday was all about. But it wasn't about that at all. I was optimistic, believing you were finally going to save our first Parliament, which is a significant heritage to Ontario, to Ontarians, to our history of politics and Parliament. I was convinced that's what you had in mind

when you introduced this today, but it wasn't to be. I believed, Minister, that you on many occasions said this is a vitally important site, but you do nothing to stop it from being covered up by a Porsche dealership. Yes, I'm disappointed. Yes, you have presented, dare I say, some good things here today.

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues): You haven't even read it.

Mr Marchese: I haven't read it? On the brief cursory review of your bill, there are some good things, I say to you, Minister, but unless demolition can be prevented and incentives made available, I'm sorry; we won't be able to protect our heritage. We just won't be able to do it.

Some good things: provincial power to designate provincially significant heritage. That's OK, but it does not prevent demolition of our heritage buildings. Do you know what it does? It allows him or you, the government, to designate a building, it holds it for six months and then the private sector can tear it down.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: That's wrong.

Mr Marchese: Sorry, Minister. That power doesn't prevent demolition. It only allows you, and not the city, to designate, which is good. Allowing yourself the power to designate is OK, but you have to give yourself or the city the power to demolish heritage sites.

The minister of post-secondary education will tell me outside why I am wrong, but show me in your bill where you do that.

Standard designation criteria: this could provide needed guidance and predictability, though it may mean a property that should be designated is not. That's possible, if the criteria are too restrictive.

So, yes, there are some positive things that the heritage community will, by and large, support. But if you don't give the city the power to prevent demolition and give heritage owners the incentives, we will not be able to protect our heritage; we just won't.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I ask for unanimous consent for second and third reading of the Ontario Heritage Act without further debate.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: New Democrats want to help the Premier out today, so we're asking unanimous consent for a motion of solemn prayer, harnessing public power, to solve a serious problem. We want to do what the Premier suggested and pray that there won't be blackouts or brownouts as a result of the blind faith the Conservatives and Liberals place on hydro privatization and deregulation. Let's all get down on our knees and pray. Is there unanimous consent?

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I heard some noes.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent for second and third reading of Bill 110, An Act to amend the Em-

ployment Standards Act, so that workers can have a long weekend on July 1, just like members of this Legislature.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

VISITORS

Ms Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): I'm happy to introduce in the members' gallery today a former member from this House from Parry Sound-Muskoka, Mr Dan Waters.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm asking for unanimous consent that Ontario's third smog day of the summer of 2003 is named Smog Day Eves.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

Hon David Young (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I thought other members of this Legislative Assembly would like to know what you undoubtedly know. There are three honoured guests in your gallery today. They are: Zul Kassamali, who is the president of the Multicultural Alliance for Seniors and Aging; with him is Gerry Funston, who is a Toronto resident and a very well-respected former publishing executive; last, but by no means least, a very dear and old friend of mine, Sid Gladstone, who is a distinguished veteran of the Air Force and is currently very involved in a very important project, the Dominion memory project. I'm thrilled that they're here to join us today from Willowdale.

DEFERRED VOTES

ONTARIO HOME PROPERTY
TAX RELIEF FOR SENIORS ACT, 2003
LOI DE 2003 SUR L'ALLÈGEMENT
DE L'IMPÔT FONCIER RÉSIDENTIEL
POUR LES PERSONNES ÂGÉES
DE L'ONTARIO

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 43, An Act to provide Ontario home property tax relief for seniors / Projet de loi 43, Loi prévoyant un allègement de l'impôt foncier résidentiel pour les personnes âgées de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1430 to 1435.

The Speaker: All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes		
Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Mushinski, Marilyn
Baird, John R.	Hastings, John	Newman, Dan
Barrett, Toby	Hudak, Tim	O'Toole, John
Beaubien, Marcel	Jackson, Cameron	Ouellette, Jerry J.

Chudleigh, Ted	Johns, Helen	Runciman, Robert W.
Clark, Brad	Johnson, Bert	Sampson, Rob
Coburn, Brian	Kells, Morley	Spina, Joseph
Cunningham, Dianne	Klees, Frank	Sterling, Norman W.
DeFaria, Carl	Marland, Margaret	Stewart, R. Gary
Dunlop, Garfield	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tascona, Joseph N.
Ecker, Janet	Maves, Bart	Tsubouchi, David H.
Elliott, Brenda	Mazzilli, Frank	Turnbull, David
Eves, Ernie	McDonald, AL	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Galt, Doug	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Gilchrist, Steve	Molinari, Tina R.	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gill, Raminder	Munro, Julia	Wood, Bob
Guzzo, Garry J.	Murdoch, Bill	Young, David

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Duncan, Dwight	McLeod, Lyn
Bisson, Gilles	Gerretsen, John	McMeekin, Ted
Bountrogianni, Marie	Gravelle, Michael	Patten, Richard
Boyer, Claudette	Hampton, Howard	Peters, Steve
Brown, Michael A.	Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry
Bryant, Michael	Kennedy, Gerard	Prue, Michael
Churley, Marilyn	Kormos, Peter	Pupatello, Sandra
Cleary, John C.	Kwinter, Monte	Ramsay, David
Colle, Mike	Levac, David	Ruprecht, Tony
Cordiano, Joseph	Marchese, Rosario	Sergio, Mario
Crozier, Bruce	Martel, Shelley	Smitherman, George
Di Cocco, Caroline	McGuinty, Dalton	Sorbara, Greg

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 51; the nays are 36.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.
Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

THE RIGHT CHOICES FOR
EQUITY IN EDUCATION ACT
(BUDGET MEASURES), 2003

LOI DE 2003
SUR LES BONS CHOIX POUR L'ÉQUITÉ
EN MATIÈRE D'ÉDUCATION
(MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 53, An Act respecting the equity in education tax credit / Projet de loi 53, Loi concernant le crédit d'impôt pour l'équité en matière d'éducation.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1439 to 1444.

The Speaker: All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes		
Baird, John R.	Hastings, John	Mushinski, Marilyn
Barrett, Toby	Hudak, Tim	Newman, Dan
Beaubien, Marcel	Jackson, Cameron	O'Toole, John
Chudleigh, Ted	Johns, Helen	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Clark, Brad	Johnson, Bert	Runciman, Robert W.
Coburn, Brian	Kells, Morley	Sampson, Rob
Cunningham, Dianne	Klees, Frank	Spina, Joseph
DeFaria, Carl	Kwinter, Monte	Sterling, Norman W.
Dunlop, Garfield	Marland, Margaret	Stewart, R. Gary

Ecker, Janet
Elliott, Brenda
Eves, Ernie
Galt, Doug
Gilchrist, Steve
Gill, Raminder
Guzzo, Garry J.
Hardeman, Ernie

Martiniuk, Gerry
Maves, Bart
Mazzilli, Frank
McDonald, AL
Miller, Norm
Molinari, Tina R.
Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill

Tascona, Joseph N.
Tsubouchi, David H.
Turnbull, David
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Wood, Bob
Young, David

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic
Bisson, Gilles
Bountrogianni, Marie
Boyer, Claudette
Bradley, James J.
Brown, Michael A.
Bryant, Michael
Churley, Marilyn
Cleary, John C.
Colle, Mike
Cordiano, Joseph
Crozier, Bruce

Di Cocco, Caroline
Duncan, Dwight
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hampton, Howard
Hoy, Pat
Kennedy, Gerard
Kormos, Peter
Levac, David
Marchese, Rosario
Martel, Shelley
McGuinty, Dalton

McLeod, Lyn
McMeekin, Ted
Patten, Richard
Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Prue, Michael
Pupatello, Sandra
Ramsay, David
Ruprecht, Tony
Sergio, Mario
Smitherman, George
Sorbara, Greg

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 51; the nays are 36.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Premier. Today we've had yet more confirmation, as if it were needed, that there exists a very real possibility of brownouts or blackouts this summer. Yesterday I criticized your government for failing to inform Ontarians about how to better conserve electricity in their homes and businesses. Today I want to talk about your failure to prepare for the real possibility of a blackout or brownout. I don't want Ontarians to panic, but I do want them to be prepared. If the power goes out, people aren't going to be able to turn on their TVs or radios to find out what they should be doing. Shut-ins who use cordless phones or whose telephones are plugged into answering machines won't be able to call for help. Given the very real possibility of blackouts or brownouts, tell us: why hasn't your government started sharing any information with Ontarians about what they should do in case we have a blackout or a brownout?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): We have been sharing information on the Ministry of Energy Web site with respect to things the average Ontarian can do to help conserve energy, especially during very hot days and peak demand periods. There are a number of things, as I talked about

yesterday, that the average Ontarian can do to help us during these extremely intense and hot days.

1450

Mr McGuinty: What I'm talking about today is emergency planning. We're hoping it does not happen, but there's a real possibility it will: power might go out. I think we've got a responsibility to tell Ontarians what they should do in that eventuality.

If the power goes out, what happens to people in elevators? I think we need to tell them about that. Food and medicine that has to be refrigerated may spoil, and there are things they can do to help prevent that from happening. Traffic signals will go out of service, and I think it's important that we remind Ontarians what the law is on that. You can't buy gasoline for your car, because gas pumps rely on electricity. If we don't start providing people with information now, 911 could be jammed because people may not know they should not call there except in the case of a real emergency.

Given the very real threat, Premier, isn't it time you started educating the public on what to do, just in case the power goes out?

Hon Mr Eves: The leader of the official opposition and the leader of the third party were in this Legislature about a year ago today, fearmongering about exactly the same issue. They weren't right then, and they aren't right now.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, if you have information you're not sharing with us, then I'd ask you to do that now, because based on all the objective information we have received, there exists the very real possibility of a blackout or a brownout this summer. Your Minister of Energy tells us he cannot guarantee us that we will not have a blackout. You yourself said yesterday that you were looking to divine intervention to ensure that we do not have a blackout or a brownout this summer. It's not the time for panic, nor is it the time for denial.

Should people who rely on electric pumps for well water buy some bottled water? I think maybe we should be telling them that. We should be telling parents with newborn babies that maybe they should consider buying ready-to-use formula. What about seniors on oxygen? Should they purchase backup canisters and let utilities know their special needs? I think they should.

When computers are down and televisions and radios aren't working, I think it's important that you tell people now rather than wait until then to give them the best possible advice on how to prepare for the real possibility that we'll have a blackout or a brownout this summer.

Hon Mr Eves: There is not a very real possibility. There's always the chance, when you have very hot weather—which obviously the province of Ontario doesn't control—that you have to import power more than you would. We are taking steps to bring on-line 2,500 more megawatts of power this summer than last summer. We already have an additional 800 megawatts on-line that weren't on-line last summer. By the time those additional 2,500 come on, we will have 11% more supply this summer than we had last summer.

Having said that, I happen to have more faith in the integrity and responsibility of the average Ontario citizen than you obviously do. I think the average Ontarian will do the right thing to conserve energy and help the province over this difficult period of a few hot days in a row.

Most people are fairly objective about this. Some people, I guess for political reasons, fearmonger about this. If you want to talk about who imported power and who didn't, I can get into that discussion in your next question.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):

My question is to the Premier. Once again, we have another example of your government giving a special kind of deal to one of your friends. This time, it's the co-chair of your single largest fundraising event—that would be the Premier's dinner—and that fundraiser is Jim Ginou. I'm talking about the Ontario Place food service contract he gave to Cara Foods.

Years ago, we raised concerns about your government giving a contract to Cara Foods over another bid. An outside independent consultant described the Cara bid as "about the weakest presentation and weakest effort we have seen in our 14 years in this industry," and he warned that Mr Ginou had ties to Cara Foods.

At the time, the entire cornerstone of the defence for this special deal was that Cara was going to pick up the tab for renovating the facilities at Ontario Place. We found out today that the province had a secret deal with Cara. The secret deal in fact put the taxpayers of Ontario on the hook to repay Cara for those renovations to the tune of \$2.3 million. The question, Premier, is this: how can you justify entering into that contract in the first place, one that was outbid by another bidder, and how can you justify a secret deal that ended up costing Ontario taxpayers \$2.3 million?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The Minister of Tourism and Recreation can respond to this.

Hon Brian Coburn (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): Back whenever that contract was signed there was a lot of work that had to be done at Ontario Place. That actually saved taxpayers money because the work done was to help some of the food concessions meet some of the needs they had in providing their contract. If we had done as government the settlement that was agreed to, it would have cost us millions of dollars more, so it was a good deal for taxpayers.

Mr McGuinty: I can understand why the Premier doesn't want to deal with this, but I'll return to him nonetheless. Premier, the other bidder, just so you're aware of this, was prepared to pay \$2.7 million more in rent than Cara Foods. Your only defence was that Cara was willing to put in more money for renovations, but your government had already given Cara a secret deal to pay back the cost of those renovations that cost taxpayers \$2.3 million. The contract with Cara Foods cost Ontario

taxpayers \$2.7 million in lost rent to Ontario Place and another \$2.3 million as part of your secret deal. How can you defend a deal entered into by the chair of your single biggest fundraiser, held annually, that ended up costing taxpayers \$5 million?

Hon Mr Coburn: Up until 1995 we were subsidizing Ontario Place to the tune of about \$10 million. That was under the Liberal and NDP reign. When we came in we had to find different ways of managing Ontario Place, and today it is to the tune of about \$500,000, so there have been great strides that we have made. Sometimes when you get a deal that is too good to be true, it is too good to be true. That may be one of the reasons why they didn't accept something that was so outrageously lucrative that it could have never stood the test of time.

Mr McGuinty: You were warned about this deal, not only by us but by an independent, outside consultant. He said with respect to Cara's bid, "It's about the weakest presentation and weakest effort that we have seen in our 14 years in this industry." He specifically warned that Mr Ginou had ties to Cara Foods. You said in defence of this deal that at least Cara was going to pick up the tab for renovations. Cara decided they wanted to get out of the deal. Not only did we lose \$2.7 million that we would have had had we given the deal to the highest bidder, but now we've got to end up paying \$2.3 million to pick up the cost for renovations that you assured us would be paid for by Cara. I ask you again, Premier, how can you justify this deal entered into by the chair of your single biggest annual fundraising event, a deal that cost Ontario taxpayers \$5 million?

Hon Mr Coburn: Whenever the contract was signed, part of the agreement was that work had to be done at Ontario Place. Cara went ahead and did that work at a tremendous saving, rather than have the government do it. Part of the contract that was signed was, if it's not a good deal for both parties, there's an opt-out clause, which Cara exercised. At the end of the day the \$2.3 million was paid. It was a far better deal for the taxpayers than the millions of dollars it would have cost to fix it up had we done it through the government.

I would like to indicate as well that we have a wider variety of food operators down there now that are well received by those who visit Ontario Place, and we've reduced the dependence on the taxpayer by well over \$9 million.

1500

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. We are now told that you have turned to prayer as the answer to the problems your scheme of hydro privatization and deregulation has created. Your government used to say that Ontario had plenty of power, so that unlike California, deregulation would go off without a hitch. That was Jim Wilson, former energy minister, in 2001. He was wrong. Jim Wilson promised overall hydro prices would reduce by

\$3 billion to \$6 billion after privatization and deregulation. Wrong again. Jim Wilson also said that electricity conservation and electricity efficiency strategies were useless, and that's why the Conservative government terminated them. Clearly wrong again.

Premier, have you now turned to prayer because everything that your government said in promoting hydro privatization and deregulation hasn't worked?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): First of all, the leader of the third party will know that we have not privatized hydro, either OPG or Hydro One. He knows that for a fact. He stands up and prefaces his question with "Well, now that you've privatized hydro, rates have gone up."

He will also know, having been in Bob Rae's cabinet, that we have imported power for as long as there has been an Ontario Hydro or an OPG or a Hydro One. He knows that in the regular course of business, when there is not enough supply during peak periods in Ontario, we import power from other jurisdictions, such as Quebec, Manitoba, Michigan and New York state. He knows that, he knows it has gone on for decades, yet he stands up in the House and pretends that this is something brand new and it's just happening now in the last few months or years.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Eves: Pardon?

Interjection: Short-term memory loss.

Hon Mr Eves: As a matter of fact, it has been going on for probably 50, 60, 70 years in the province.

Mr Hampton: Premier, don't misunderstand me. Prayer is good. But you said that you had the legal authority to sell off Hydro One and that would be good for consumers. You were wrong again. But don't feel bad; the Liberals agreed with you on that one. You said that selling a minority stake in Hydro One would be a good thing, but then you later admitted that was wrong too. You said that hydro deregulation would promote meaningful competition and bring down prices. Wrong again. You said that temporary hydro rate caps would pay for themselves. In 12 months, you're already \$600 million wrong on that one. You said private power companies would not gouge consumers in the privatized market, but Brascan's outrageous gouging of the people of Wawa proved you wrong there.

As I said, prayer is good, but don't you think it's time to admit that hydro privatization and deregulation hasn't worked the way you thought it would?

Hon Mr Eves: First of all, I never said at least three quarters of the things he said. He sort of embellishes the truth and makes—except for maybe the part about the Liberals agreeing with us.

The government of Ontario does not control the weather in the province. Obviously any time there is a peak demand, the province has now, and always has had, to import power from other jurisdictions. What we said was that over a four-year period of time this fund will pay for itself. In the previous four years of time that fund would have had a surplus of \$200 million in it. So the

fact that he says today, after 11 or 12 months, you'd be this much behind is interesting, but this is a four-year plan, not an 11-month plan or a 12-month plan.

If you want to talk about importing power, the highest net importing year of power in the history of the province that I can lay my hands on was the year 1990 when you two people shared that privilege and you were in power with your grandiose schemes for power.

Mr Hampton: Premier, you also said that Pickering A nuclear station would be back in service producing electricity three years ago. Wrong on that one. You then gave four more dates when Pickering A would be back producing electricity. Wrong on all of those. Most recently, you and your energy minister said that Pickering A would be producing electricity by June. Wrong again. You said that Bruce A nuclear station would be back this spring producing electricity. Wrong again. Then you promised that your \$100-million temporary emergency generators would be producing power by June 15. Wrong again.

Premier, prayer is good, but first you must repent. Do you admit hydro privatization hasn't worked and recognize that public power is the answer?

Hon Mr Eves: I'm happy to see that the leader of the third party has another occupation he can fall back on if required. That was actually very good, Howard. That was quite good.

To the leader of the third party, I would say that there are going to be 2,500 more megawatts of power on stream this summer. Even the IMO report which came out recently indicates that when those 2,500 megawatts are up and running, in addition to the 800 that are running this summer and weren't running last summer at Bruce, we are going to have 11% more power in the province. That's going to happen within a matter of a few days or weeks, and when that happens, we are going to have 11% more capacity than we had last year.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Again to the Premier, first you must confess your sins; then you pray.

Premier, this week we have had multiple revelations concerning corporations that gave thousands to the Conservative Party and then got millions in Conservative government contracts. Cara Operations gave thousands of dollars to your party; then they got an Ontario Place contract for \$50 million. Meanwhile, everyone who works at Ontario Place seemed to know it was a bad idea, a bad deal, but they were ignored. Now Ontario taxpayers are on the hook for a further \$2.3 million.

Your pal John Danson's Unauthorized Solutions Inc gave over \$6,000 to the Minister of Health in his leadership bid; then he got a \$1.2-million government contract to promote "healthy lifestyles," even though a nearly identical proposal had already been turned down before the contribution.

A group of private power companies pay your party over \$170,000, then get \$100 million in private power contracts.

Premier, these deals benefit your financial contributors but they don't benefit the public of Ontario. Are the people of Ontario wrong to think that something looks very fishy here?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The leader of the third party sees a skeleton under every single bed, in every single closet. He thinks there is always something subversive going on and there are some secret deals being made somewhere.

I would say to the leader of the third party that on at least two of the three issues that he talked about there were requests for proposals that went out, and they were followed in the ordinary course of business, as far as I am aware.

I wish that we could all be perfect and that nobody would ever go down a road where they might make a mistake, and I know that everything the Bob Rae government did was absolutely perfect. That's why we were spending a million dollars an hour more than we were taking in in revenue when you left office.

Mr Hampton: Premier, no one out there in the public believes that your big corporate contributors don't get favours from your government. No one believes that, because the average Ontarian, no matter how hard he or she works, is not going to get a \$2.3-million deal for walking away from a contract that they made with your government. No matter how hard they work, the average Ontarian is not going to get a \$100-million private power contract, even though the average Ontarian is more than capable of producing the zero megawatts that Toromont and TransCanada have produced so far.

It's time, Premier, to recognize what the public already knows: there are too many big corporate contributions in our political system. If it isn't corrupt, it looks corrupt to them. So I say to you, Premier, and I say to the Liberals: will you end the corporate contributions and union contributions to our political system, so that it becomes a matter of citizen involvement and not who has the most money and who can get the biggest contributions? Will you end this abuse?

1510

Hon Mr Eves: With respect to the generation contracts that have been let, first of all, it's a prudent thing to prepare for that eventuality, something that no previous government ever bothered to do, although perhaps they should have. With respect to those contracts, they were all put through a very proper request for proposal process and were tendered. The appropriate tendering and successful proponent won in every single case.

With respect to the comment he made at the end and the question that he posed, I understand he has a very philosophically different point of view; that is, he believes that everything done in the political process should be paid for 100% by the taxpayers of Ontario. We actually believe that private individuals, unions and com-

panies should be able to donate to the political candidate or party of their choice, and therein lies the difference.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): New question?

Ms Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): My question is for the Premier. I'd like to talk to you about a company that went through a very proper request for proposal process and was not successful. The name of that company was Unauthorized Solutions. They received a letter from the Ministry of Health telling them, "Thank you, but you did not meet the requirements for this RFP." In the last several days, we have now been reading in the news media about the Minister of Health and his relationship with this company, Unauthorized Solutions.

Given what we now know, that the Minister of Health has in fact benefited from the individual affiliated with Unauthorized Solutions, who does donate and participate in other political parties but has a very significant relationship with the Minister of Health as a fundraiser to his leadership campaign and a significant donor to his leadership—the Minister of Health has now confirmed that his office was in fact involved in getting Unauthorized Solutions a project worth \$1.2 million after the Ministry of Health's office said that regrettably the proposal did not meet the necessary requirements. I'd like to know what you have to say about this matter and what kind of investigation you are now going through with the Minister of Health.

Hon Mr Eves: First of all, I presume the company she's talking about is the one that's run by one John Danson, who came forward with a different proposal than the RFP he lost that actually had some Olympic athletes participating, talking about a very constructive program against smoking for young people in Ontario. There was a certain amount set aside in the Ministry of Health budget for that anti-smoking program. The amount of \$10 million comes to mind, although I'm doing this from memory, so I stand to be corrected. The minister's office and the minister decided to have a pilot project and thought this one was very inventive. It involved Olympic athletes, people that young people in this province might actually listen to, in terms of not smoking in the future. It was acted upon in a pilot project fashion, which has actually been around for many years in this place.

Ms Pupatello: Actually, I think you do a disservice to Olympians by having them participate in a program that doesn't appear to have gone through all the proper steps you just mentioned, which you suggest all these proposals go through. Let me show you the letter from the Minister of Health to this individual, which says they did not meet the requirements. Then we have a letter to St Michael's Hospital saying, "Here's \$1.3 million," for something that apparently the hospital is now on record as saying they had nothing to do with the project; they simply funnelled the funding. Funding was funnelled to St Michael's to Unauthorized Solutions, the same company that did not meet the criteria from the Ministry of Health in the first place. If this is such a wonderful program, you'd think you would have done those Olympians a service to have them participate in a request

for a proposal. Is this some kind of fund available to ministers for their high-end donors or those individuals who participate as fundraisers in their leadership bid, that they all of a sudden take a program that didn't meet ministry requirements, turn it into a pilot project and hand it over without other companies out in Ontario who can equally participate in running a pilot project—

The Speaker: I'm afraid the member's time is up.

Hon Mr Eves: The honourable member will know that pilot projects have been used by all three parties in this House when they were in government for various issues. For example, there was a very effective pilot project run through Sunnybrook and Women's College about cochlear ear implants for, I believe, \$1.73 million by the previous Bob Rae government. There were similar ones used by the David Peterson government.

Having said that, she will be quite familiar with John Danson, being the son of Barney Danson, a former Pierre Elliott Trudeau cabinet minister. I'm not going to stand in this House and question his integrity or the Minister of Health's integrity. I will say to her, though, that I had a conversation with the Minister of Health, who is out of province today on business for the Ministry of Health in Washington. He has indicated to me that he is referring this entire matter to the Integrity Commissioner. In case you or anybody else thinks that this wasn't appropriately done, the Integrity Commissioner can rule on this issue.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. First of all, I want to congratulate him on his superb leadership in the fight to get the federal government to come up with its fair share of the costs relating to SARS.

For almost 13 years, I've been privileged to serve in the Ontario Legislature. During this time, I've always considered the elected municipal councillors in my riding to be my colleagues. I've always sought to build strong working relationships with them. We've worked together in the interest of our communities. I've always worked to solve the problems they've brought to my attention.

The government is looking at a policy that would compel municipalities to hold referenda before they can increase property taxes. This proposal is not being well received by our municipal partners and has generated a negative response from a number of municipal councils in my riding of Waterloo-Wellington.

I'm aware that recently the minister had an opportunity in the city of Kitchener to address the Large Urban Mayors' Caucus of Ontario, LUMCO, a key partner in the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. He spoke to them about the government's property tax referendum proposal. Can the minister advise this House about the policy proposal on municipal referenda and on his work with municipalities on this issue?

Hon David Young (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Protecting the interests of taxpayers is the most important principle this government holds. But the

Ernie Eves government believes that there is indeed more work to be done to protect taxpayers' wallets. I've been proud to work with the member for Waterloo-Wellington as part of the government—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Young: I will say to you, sir, that I am particularly proud that he and I have supported 225 tax cuts for the people of this great province.

Since 1995, not only have we delivered personal tax cuts but we have also lowered taxes on businesses that have helped create well in excess of a million new jobs. I will note that the Liberals voted against each one.

When it comes to delivering the same kind of protection, Premier Eves and I are there. We want to ensure that the same protection exists for taxpayers at the municipal level. In fact, I know there is a lot we can learn from some of our municipal leaders. One example is in Puslinch township. Mayor Brad Whitcombe and his council delivered a tax freeze to their taxpayers this year. That jurisdiction has the lowest tax rate in Wellington county.

Mr Arnott: I want to thank the minister for his response and for his willingness to communicate with our municipal partners. On this issue of property tax referenda, they want their views to be clearly understood. A few days ago, Wellington county council passed a unanimous resolution asking the government to set aside the proposal obligating councils to have property tax referenda before contemplating tax increases. The town of Minto called a special meeting of council and insisted that I attend. We discussed this proposal, and they voiced their disagreement with it. Mayor Wayne Roth of the township of Wilmot and the councils of the township of Centre Wellington, the township of Guelph-Eramosa, the city of Kitchener and the township of Wellington North have all expressed their strong concerns about the referendum issue.

1520

What can the minister tell my municipalities in Waterloo-Wellington in response to the objections they are bringing forward? Will he assure them that their views will be thoroughly considered before any final decisions are made on extending the principle of taxpayer protection to the municipal level of government?

Hon Mr Young: This government has a very firm commitment to protecting taxpayers, and part of that is recognizing that many of the best solutions may well lie in what municipalities already do. We will certainly consider the thoughts and insight of those individuals as we move forward with this policy, and we will.

Governments need to listen to taxpayers. We need to listen to them in order to learn from them, to earn their trust and to seek approval when it comes to taxes. This government understands that. We want municipal governments across the province to understand that as well. In some instances, they do, and in some instances, they don't.

I know that most local politicians are true friends of the taxpayer. They understand, as does this government,

that people demand lower taxes and should have the final say.

Extending the Taxpayer Protection Act that we have provincially to the municipal realm may well be a controversial issue. But I say to you that I know from knocking on doors in Willowdale and across this province that it is something that the people of this province want to see happen, and it is something that this government will deliver.

INSURANCE RATES

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): I'll go to the Deputy Premier. As you well know, people all across the province of Ontario—car drivers, owners—are being hit with fantastic rate increases. Your government promised to get auto insurance rates under control. That was some 199 days ago. You have yet to deliver on that promise.

But there's another concern in addition to that one, and that is property insurance premiums. Those are going through the roof as well. I'll give you one particular instance here. Gianfranco Belli, a homeowner in Sudbury, tells us that last year he paid \$309-plus taxes for home insurance. This year, it's going to cost him \$649 plus taxes. That's roughly a 125% increase for his home insurance premiums.

We've been focusing a great deal of attention, and quite rightly so, on auto insurance premiums, but what Mr Belli wants to know is, what are you going to do in government to help him and homeowners just like him across the province of Ontario?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I appreciate the question from the Leader of the Opposition. We certainly recognize that insurance is extremely important to the homeowners in the province of Ontario. Obviously, our number one commitment is to ensure that there continues to be a very strong and vibrant insurance market in Ontario that can capably serve the consumers.

As the Leader of the Opposition knows, the regulator is responsible for monitoring the financial health of the insurance companies and making sure they can fulfill their obligations.

We need to make sure that homeowners are aware of the fact that they should be working with their brokers and their agents to obtain a better understanding of the factors that obviously influence their premiums. They need to do everything that they possibly can. Certainly our government will be doing everything that we can to protect homeowners.

Mr McGuinty: You should know that when constituents phone us, they don't want to talk about a regulator. You should know, as well, that the regulator doesn't regulate property insurance premiums. They're looking after auto insurance premiums. You should know that, at a minimum.

It's not just affecting homeowners. Small businesses are also getting hit. Here's the story of a bowling alley in

Kirkland Lake—the Uptown Bowl. It's owned by Fred and Sonia Lang. Last year, their insurance was \$3,000. They didn't make a single claim. This year, the same coverage would cost over \$7,000. The only way they could afford to pay their insurance was to reduce their coverage and to assume greater personal risk.

I ask you again, when is your government going to start to do something—anything—when it comes to property insurance premiums, either for homeowners or small businesses, across the province?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I think it's very important to put it into some perspective. I think we have to recognize the fact that the market has changed. Throughout the world, there are different experiences occurring as a result of insurance. But I want to certainly let the Leader of the Opposition know that we are committed to doing everything that we possibly can to ensure that we have a strong industry. By having a strong industry, we can better protect the homeowners in the province of Ontario.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): My question is for the minister responsible for seniors, the hard-working and very effective member for Mississauga East, who is going to be in the great riding of Perth-Middlesex this weekend to join the local Portuguese community for the Listowel Festival of the Holy Spirit.

Minister, our government is committed to supporting seniors, and I know you have been working hard on behalf of all Ontarians, including those Portuguese-Canadian seniors you'll meet this weekend. An important part of our commitment is Bill 43, the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act, which proposes to eliminate the burden of residential education property tax paid by seniors who rent their own homes. If passed, the act would provide \$450 million in benefits for our seniors next year. About 945,000 senior households would each save an average of \$475 per year. Minister, I would like you to stand in your place and tell me what the reception is from seniors.

Hon Carl DeFaria (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors): I thank my colleague for the question. Ontario's seniors have contributed to the growth and prosperity of Ontario, and yes, our commitment to Ontario's seniors is real. We all know what the Liberals have said. They said no to Ontario's seniors. They said they would roll back the tax relief we passed today. Our government feels our seniors deserve this break. The United Senior Citizens of Ontario, representing approximately 300,000 seniors, support this measure. The Canadian snowbirds support this measure. Ontarians support our seniors. Do you want to know who said no to our seniors? Dalton McGuinty.

Mr Johnson: I thank the honourable member for that response. I know that the roughly 13,500 seniors in my riding of Perth-Middlesex would want me to express their gratitude for the work you do on their behalf. You have also introduced legislation to eliminate mandatory

retirement at age 65 in Ontario. This legislation is great news for older workers in Ontario. Minister, please tell this House why you think it's important to give older workers the right to decide when to retire.

Hon Mr DeFaria: Our government believes seniors should have the right to choose to work past the age of 65 if they so wish. It will put choice back in the hands of individuals. The freedom to choose should belong to everyone, regardless of age. People over 65 are productive and valuable contributors to the Ontario economy, now more than ever before. It's clear that our government feels Ontario's seniors deserve all we can provide. Let's give them the respect they deserve. We on this side say that our seniors are adult enough to decide when they will retire.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Minister, we were amazed and somewhat dismayed to hear that you think barbecues are a major cause of smog, while at the same time denying the role of coal plants as the single biggest contributors to smog. Your solution to deadly smog is to get everybody to stop barbecuing, and the Premier's is to order in Swiss Chalet. Minister, this is a very serious problem. Over 2,000 people are going to die prematurely in Ontario because of smog. You have to stop fiddling around the edges here, fooling people that this is going to solve the problem. Once again I am asking you today, will you commit to taking real action on smog by adopting the NDP's Public Power plan for clean air?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Minister of the Environment): The preamble is cruel, it's untrue and it's just bloody ridiculous, so I'm not answering the question.

Ms Churley: The minister said it. Minister, I'm going to tell you something else you said here: "The private sector asked us to get out of large-scale government conservation programs." He went on to say, "They may have made the odd person feel good, but they had absolutely no effect."

Minister, I'm going to ask you to step outside and you can see the effects of doing nothing about smog. Check out the emergency room on a day like today. Visit a classroom and you can see a number of students using puffers to help them deal with their serious breathing problems.

1530

In the light of the very real health impact of smog, your government's response to date is a cruel joke. Tell us today that you repent, that you didn't mean it when you said that conservation didn't work and that you have not caved in to your buddies in the private sector and you will bring in a strong conservation program, that you now believe in conservation. Tell us that, Minister. Will you repent?

Hon Mr Wilson: That quote comes from a briefing from the NDP-appointed deputy minister and assistant deputy minister, who said, and had the charts to prove, that the NDP's conservation program of maybe free fridges but not free fridges, little stickers everywhere, millions and millions and millions of dollars spent on energy conservation—and what happened to energy? It soared through the roof. Usage went way up exponentially. So it had no effect at all on usage.

And who ran the coal plants full-out every smog day that they were in government? The NDP. Who sold more power out of coal plants to the United States at cut-rate prices? The NDP. Who bought power back at outrageous prices? The NDP.

I don't know how they've got the gall to ask these questions. Your energy conservation program was a fake. It didn't have any effect. John Baird's is going to work a lot better, I can tell you, when he brings it in.

HAZARDOUS WASTE

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): I also have a question for the Minister of the Environment. I'm assuming you've heard of the toxic tar ponds site in Sydney, Nova Scotia, which has become known as the most toxic site in Canada. Ontario is accepting untreated toxic material from the Dometic tank on the Sydney, Nova Scotia, tar ponds. It was scheduled to be trucked into Ontario last winter and is now rescheduled for this summer. Apparently the contaminated soil that caused a lot of people to become sick has already been landfilled, untreated, here in Ontario at Clean Harbors, without notice. Please explain to the residents of Sarnia-Lambton and the people of Ontario why you are allowing the importation of highly toxic waste and then simply landfilling it untreated, a practice outlawed in every other jurisdiction. Why has Ontario become the toxic dumping ground for other jurisdictions under your government's watch?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Minister of the Environment): The waste in question is handled under certificates of approval. No liquid hazardous waste is allowed to be put into a landfill site or into this site—as you've been accusing the government of for quite a long time now—without pre-treatment. The certificates of approval aren't in the hands of politicians; they're in the hands of the directors, the bureaucrats who do this. They have no axe to grind and they have no company to be in favour with. They're there to protect the people of Ontario—and doing a fine good job, I might add.

Ms Di Cocco: I'd suggest that the minister learn exactly what untreated hazardous landfilling of toxic waste means, because that's what is happening, whether you know it or not.

Your government is responsible for developing a gigantic toxic legacy for the future. You are watching the creation of an environmental cesspool by transferring thousands of tonnes of toxic waste from Nova Scotia and

have already landfilled over a million tonnes there. It's coming from jurisdictions other than Ontario, because Ontario has the lowest standards and because it's done on the cheap.

You fast-tracked the environmental assessment process in 1997 and you gave permission for the site to expand. Your lax rules are wrong, irresponsible and a hazard to people's health. You're creating a much larger problem than that now in Sydney, Nova Scotia. How do you answer to those facts?

Hon Mr Wilson: The site in question has an inspector on-site full time from the Ministry of the Environment. They check everything that's going in. They make sure it abides by the laws. This government updated those laws to make sure they were a lot tougher than when the Liberals were in office. I have confidence in our people in the government who are paid to protect the environment. As I said, they have no axe to grind, except to protect the environment for your children and grandchildren and their children and grandchildren.

If the honourable member has some concrete proof that someone's breaking the law, then go to the police or go to the environment police outside of this place or go to the OPP and file a complaint. You've been going on about this for quite a while. I know it's a great political issue, but go talk to the inspector on-site and ask him or her, depending on the day, whether they're doing their job and whether they have the confidence of the people of Ontario.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Highway 205, half of 410: just this past Monday the Premier was in Brampton to announce a major infrastructure investment, the extension of Highway 410.

Brampton's a booming city. We've got a population of over 325,000 people. Many of these people work in Brampton. Many of them commute to Toronto or elsewhere in the GTA. But most of all, these people need to get from where they are to somewhere else at some point. As such, we need an efficient transportation system to meet these growing needs. How is this investment going to help us? How is it going to help Brampton's strong economy and our quality of life?

Hon Frank Klees (Minister of Transportation): I want to thank the member from Brampton Centre for his question. I want to say, first of all, that the member has been a strong advocate for the extension of the 410. No one has spoken as strongly in favour of this project as the member.

I had the privilege of attending with the Premier and area MPPs to make an announcement for a nine-kilometre extension of the 410. Truly Brampton and Peel region, in fact the entire GTA, are rapidly growing. We depend on our transportation system, and not only for the movement of goods. Some trillion dollars' worth of goods are moved on our highways every year; \$325 million

worth of goods are moving across the 410 right now. It's a growing and expanding area. The extension of the 410 is going to improve the quality of life. It'll strengthen the economy. It'll ensure we continue to have the infrastructure in place that we need for a growing economy in this province.

Mr Spina: We know it's important to invest in other modes of transportation to provide choice for our commuters. We have commuters who not only go in and out of Toronto from the suburbs; we also know it's important for jobs and industry in the suburbs for people who come to work outside Toronto, because that's where a lot of jobs are. A reliable and efficient public transit system in Brampton and throughout the GTA gives more people the option to leave their cars at home. Minister, what action is the ministry taking to improve transit in the GTA, and what do you have coming for more attractive commuting options?

Hon Mr Klees: The member refers to the importance of transit, and our government certainly agrees with that. We've invested some \$3.9 billion for transit since 1995. We announced some 645 million in additional dollars for interregional transportation earlier this month. Of that, we allocated some \$73 million last January for GTA municipalities to buy new vehicles to refurbish their transit fleets or extend the life of their existing fleets. This includes some \$7.2 million for Mississauga, Brampton and Peel region. This investment is just part of our 10-year commitment of \$325 million a year—\$3.25 billion over 10 years—to transit in this province. Our challenge now is to bring the federal government to the table to match that \$3.25 billion. Let's have the federal government at the table and we can really do something about transit.

1540

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): My question is to the Deputy Premier. As the legislative session moves toward a close, my community continues to struggle with the fact that your government has yet to allocate promised funding for hospital restructuring. This is an important issue to the well-being of my citizens and our part of eastern Ontario. We have to get immediate action.

The process to develop an effective hospital services initiative has been a strenuous and ongoing procedure in my riding. Through the entire deliberations, however, local officials have demonstrated a commitment to the project that has been developed: a consistent vision for hospital services within the community. Despite this, the directives set forth by the local hospital council have not always received your attention, as they deserve.

In 1998, for example, a health care restructuring committee overturned a local health council directive for hospital development. This decision frustrated the local community and squandered thousands of taxpayers' dollars away. Not to be dismayed, the local community

was determined to see their project go ahead. After a town hall meeting attended by my colleague Lyn McLeod and the president of the medical academy, Dr Foley, in April 2002, the Religious Hospitallers of Saint Joseph submitted a proposal to the ministry for health and long-term-care consideration.

In March 2003, the ministry announced its intention to support the plan and included the establishment of a community-based corporation to oversee the joint governance of two hospitals.

Deputy Premier, as I stated, the funding has been agreed to in principle—a 30-day period for public consultation—nearly two months ago. I ask you, on behalf of my constituents of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, when will you announce the funding?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I appreciate the very thoughtful question from the member opposite. I know that when I was Minister of Health, he did certainly work hard on behalf of his community. I want to take this opportunity, as you leave this Legislature, to personally extend my congratulations to you for your hard work. I can assure you that the officials at the Ministry of Health are working as hard as they possibly can in order to resolve that situation and provide the appropriate funding.

Mr Cleary: Thank you, Deputy Premier, for your comments. When Minister Clement visited eastern Ontario last February, he was quick to applaud the community efforts which were demonstrated at the Winchester Memorial Hospital in Dundas, the support and the hard work of the dedicated local community. We have that same dedication in the eastern part of the riding, and the people in my community want to get at the restructuring of the hospital services.

The process of hospital restructuring has depended on funding, and the community has waited long enough. I understand that the province has been waging a difficult battle with SARS, and I think we've all supported that. I want to ensure that the health care of my constituents is not compromised and that the wishes of the community are fully granted. The community has lived up to its end of the agreement, and now it's time for the province to step up.

Hon Mrs Witmer: Again, I do appreciate, as I said in my first response, the thoughtful manner and the very sincere question that has been asked by the member. I can certainly tell the member that I will personally communicate your concerns to the Minister of Health and personally encourage him to reach a resolution. Obviously that money would flow as would be appropriate in a timely fashion.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): My question is to the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services. Last Thursday in the Owen Sound Sun Times, Wayne Richardson of Bruce Grey Children's

Services claimed that your ministry is significantly underfunding this agency. I understand that there has been a historical funding inequity for children's mental health in Bruce-Grey. What has your ministry done to fix this problem with Bruce Grey Children's Services?

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services): I thank my colleague from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound for the question. He's a fierce champion of his constituents, and we appreciate that.

My ministry recognizes that there have been challenges for this agency, and we have made every effort to address this with Bruce Grey Children's Services. One of the ways we have done this is by increasing the funding to Bruce Grey Children's Services by 50% since the year 2000. In fact, since November 2001, southwest region has received \$1.5 million to support children's mental health services for children up to the age of six. Although these counties constitute only 18% of the children's population in the region, they actually receive 26% of the funding as part of our ministry's efforts to redress historical funding imbalances. I want to assure my colleague that I have made every effort in any announcements from my ministry to include an equity component to make sure that funding is fair all across this province.

I would also like to say to my colleague that this area has, in addition to the 50% new funding, a number of new services that come to this region, such as intensive child and family services.

Mr Murdoch: Thank you for your answer, Madam Minister, but in the article Mr Richardson goes on to say, "The government hasn't made children's mental health a priority until now." I find this an odd statement and feel that you must correct the record on this inaccurate statement.

Hon Mrs Elliott: I too am offended by this inaccurate statement, and I do want to correct the record. In 2003-04, our government will invest over \$400 million in children's mental health. This is a 56% increase from when we took office. In our recent budget, we committed to a children's centre of excellence for mental health at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario.

We know we need to do more. That is why in The Road Ahead our government has committed to 50 million new dollars for children's mental health over the next three years to ensure that we have the best possible care for vulnerable children. We've been very clear. I would like to note that our opposition across the way have not one word in their campaign document about children's mental health. It speaks to our commitment and to our understanding of how very important it is to provide children's mental health services not only in Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound but for children all across Ontario.

VISITORS

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: It gives me great pleasure to welcome in the members' gallery Dr Richard Hamilton, a great educator from New Jersey, and Dr

George Lewis and Mr Harpal Dhaliwal from Universities123. If we could welcome them, please.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: As you know, the constituency of Timmins-James Bay is very far from Queen's Park, but if people could afford to drive here, I'd like to be able to recognize them. There's nobody from Timmins-James Bay, but if there was, I'd welcome them.

1550

PETITIONS

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I'm pleased to be able to rise today and to offer a petition with roughly 3,100 names on it from the Free Flamborough group for the de-amalgamation from Hamilton. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislature Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the citizens of Flamborough had no direct say in the creation of the new supercity of Hamilton; and

"Whereas the government, by regulation and legislation, forced the recent amalgamation against the overwhelming majority of the people of Flamborough; and

"Whereas the government has not delivered the promised streamlined, more efficient and accountable local government, nor the provision of better services or reduced costs; and

"Whereas the promise of tax decreases has not been met, with an average increase of 30% since amalgamation, and the expected transition costs to area taxpayers of this forced amalgamation has already exceeded the promised amount by 88%;

"Be it resolved that we, the undersigned, demand that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario immediately rescind this forced amalgamation order, return our local municipal government back to the local citizens and their democratically elected officials in Flamborough, and, in so doing, remove the bureaucratic, inefficient, single-tier governance that has been imposed on the residents of Flamborough."

I just noticed the last duly elected mayor of the town of Flamborough. I'm pleased to present this in this, the people's place, today.

VISITORS

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): On a point of order, Speaker: I'd like the members to recognize the members of the Ontario Greenhouse Alliance, affectionately known as TOGA, accompanied by the intelligent and charming Minister of Agriculture, Helen Johns. They are having a reception in committee room number 2 in a few moments. We look forward to having a good time with the greenhouse folks,

the largest agriculture sector in the riding of Erie-Lincoln.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Welcome to our Legislature. Of course, that isn't a point of order.

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's indeed my pleasure today to read a petition, which I have relentlessly read for the last period of time. It's quite unique.

"Whereas the province of Ontario has delayed the second phase of the equity in education tax credit for parents who choose to send their children to independent schools; and

"Whereas prior to the introduction of this tax credit, Ontario parents whose children attended independent schools faced a financial burden of paying taxes to an education system they did not use, plus tuition for the school of their choice; and

"Whereas the equity in education tax credit supports parental choice in education and makes independent schools more accessible to all Ontario families;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully request that the government of Ontario introduce the second phase of the tax credit forthwith and continue—without delay—the previously announced timetable for the introduction of the tax credit...."

In light of the legislation passed here today, I believe this petition has been responded to. I'm pleased to sign it.

SPECIAL SERVICES AT HOME PROGRAM

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): I have a petition sent to me by the Special Services At Home Provincial Coalition in the form of individually signed letters.

"Whereas I am a citizen who has a family member/friend with a disability. Living with a disability is a life-long reality. I need to know that this government means what it says about its promise to provide people with disabilities opportunities to live meaningful lives close to their families and in their community. I call on this government to put their philosophy into action, and take leadership in supporting families who care for a child or other family member in their home.

"Whereas the special services at home program is cost-effective and it works. Yet, your ministry spends only 6% of its billion-dollar developmental services budget on special services at home to support 18,500 families. The underfunding of SSAH has created undue stress and hardship for families with members with a disability. Families simply do not have enough support.

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the government to:

"(1) Make special services at home a program of first choice.

"(2) Increase the special services at home budget by \$25 million provincially to help meet the current needs of families.

“(3) Develop a simplified, efficient application process.

“Please tell me what you, Minister Elliott, are going to do to help us.”

That is to be directed to the Minister of Community, Family and Children’s Services, Minister Elliott. I’m very pleased to sign my name to this petition.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I have a petition to the Legislature of the province of Ontario and it’s with regard to land lease communities. It’s signed by about people and it reads as follows:

“Whereas we are being classed as second-class citizens of the province in that we do not have the same rights and privileges as other citizens

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of the province of Ontario as follows:

“We the undersigned homeowners and voters of the province of Ontario, petition the Legislature to amend the Assessment Act, O.Reg. 282/98, to allow us to have assessment notices and municipal tax bills to be sent directly to us instead of to a third party. Amendment is needed immediately before an election is called. Please do not waste the time and money to produce the property assessment and classification review, produced by Marcel Beaubien, MPP.”

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I have a petition here that has been signed by people in Stratford, Sudbury and Oshawa, and it reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Eves government has increased the fees paid by seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term care facilities by 15% over three years, or \$3.02 per day in the first year and \$2 in the second year and \$2 in the third year, effective September 1, 2002; and

“Whereas this fee increase will cost seniors and our most vulnerable more than \$200 a month after three years; and

“Whereas this increase is above the rent increase guidelines for tenants in the province of Ontario for 2002; and

“Whereas, according to the government’s own funded study, Ontario will still rank last among comparable jurisdictions in the amount of time provided to a resident for nursing and personal care; and

“Whereas the long-term-care funding partnership has been based on government accepting the responsibility to fund the care and services that residents need; and

“Whereas government needs to increase long-term-care operating funds by \$750 million over the next three years to increase the level of service for Ontario’s long-term-care residents to those in Saskatchewan in 1999; and

“Whereas this province has been built by seniors, who should be able to live out their lives with dignity, respect and comfort in this province;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“We demand that Premier Eves reduce the 15% increase over three years in accommodation costs to no more than the cost-of-living increase annually and that the provincial government provide adequate funding for nursing and personal care to a level that is at least the average standard for nursing and personal care in those 10 jurisdictions included in the government’s own funded study.”

I agree with the petition, I’ve signed it accordingly, and I’m handing it over to Jenna.

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government of Ontario has delayed the second phase of the equity in education tax credit for parents who choose to send their children to independent schools; and

“Whereas, prior to the introduction of the tax credit, Ontario parents whose children attended independent schools faced a financial burden of paying taxes to an education system they did not use, plus tuition for the school of their choice; and

“Whereas the equity in education tax credits support parental choice in education and make independent schools more accessible to all Ontario families;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully request that the government of Ontario reintroduce the second phase of the tax credit forthwith and continue, without delay, the previously announced timetable for the introduction of the tax credit over five years.”

I realize that we passed this legislation today, but I thought it important that we still present the petition from the citizens of Ontario. I’m pleased to give it to Sabrina from our home riding of Brampton Centre. But more particularly, we’re Heart Lake people, right?

Interjection: Yes.

Mr Spina: Just north of Vodden.

HOME CARE

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I have a petition here which is addressed to the Ontario Legislature, and I’m filing this on behalf of my colleague Mr Rick Bartolucci from Sudbury. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the Manitoulin-Sudbury Community Care Access Centre will be cutting homemaking services to seniors and the disabled effective June 23, 2003; and

“Whereas nursing services, personal support and homemaking services should be of equal importance; and

“Whereas most seniors and the disabled live on fixed incomes and cannot afford to purchase private home-making services; and

"Whereas many seniors and disabled people will be forced to move into institutions once their homemaking is cut off;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand that the Eves government increase the CCAC budget in order to allow them the necessary funds to enable them to continue to provide homemaking services to those who are eligible."

I agree with the petition and have signed it accordingly, because this is the area where funding really should be insisted upon for our seniors.

1600

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I've got hundreds of names here, possibly thousands, on a petition against the continuing actions of supervisors in the Hamilton-Wentworth, Ottawa-Carleton and Toronto district school boards:

"Whereas the government has cut over \$2 billion from public education over the past seven years;

"Whereas the provincial funding formula does not provide sufficient funds for local district school board trustees to meet the needs of students;

"Whereas district school boards around the province have had to cut needed programs and services, including library, music, physical education and special education" and more;

"Whereas the district school boards in Hamilton-Wentworth, Ottawa-Carleton and Toronto refused to make further cuts and were summarily replaced with government-appointed supervisors;

"Whereas these supervisors are undermining classroom education for hundreds of thousands of children;

"We, the undersigned members of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, call on the government to restore local democracy by removing the supervisors in the Hamilton-Wentworth, Ottawa-Carleton and Toronto district school boards."

I strongly support this petition and affix my signature.

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the province of Ontario has delayed the second phase of the equity in education tax credit for parents who choose to send their children to independent schools; and

"Whereas, prior to the introduction of this tax credit, Ontario parents whose children attended independent schools faced the financial burden of paying taxes to an education system they did not use, plus tuition for the school of their choice; and

"Whereas the equity in education tax credit supports parental choice in education and makes independent schools more accessible to all Ontario families—"

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): How long did it take you to write all that?

Mr Spina: It's all typed out. It's a legitimate petition, Mr Patten, thank you.

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully request that the government of Ontario reintroduce the second phase of the tax credit forthwith and continue—without delay—the previously announced timetable for the introduction of the tax credit over five years."

This is signed by Lise Campbell of Callahan Drive and David Campbell of Palmer Court. I realize that this legislation went through today but, nevertheless, we're presenting the petition from the citizens of Ontario, and I'm so pleased to do so.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THE RIGHT CHOICES ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LES BONS CHOIX (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 24, 2003, on the motion for second reading of Bill 41, An Act to implement Budget measures / Projet de loi 41, Loi mettant en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): I believe we have unanimous consent for a representative of each of the parties to do up to five minutes in tribute to the imminent retirement of my colleague the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is there consent? It is agreed.

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): It is with a mixture of emotions that I rise to say a few words about our friend and colleague Lyn McLeod. On the one hand, I'm paying tribute to someone whom we all respect, and that's something to feel very good about. On the other hand, if this is indeed Lyn's final day in the Legislature, then we are losing something precious today, and that's a sad thing for a great many people. For a start, it's a sad thing for the people of Thunder Bay. The people in that city and in that region have had 14 years of public service of a quality that I think is unmatched anywhere. The people in that community have been very lucky to have her.

Lyn was the first female party leader in Ontario's history. As Liberals, we are very proud of that, and I know that in this House we all honour that. These days, thankfully, prominent female politicians are less and less an exception, and that's a good thing. But it still matters. When I try to tell my daughter that she can be whatever she wants to be as long as she works hard and well, Lyn McLeod is who I point to.

I mentioned that Lyn's departure is a sad thing for a great many people, and I think I can speak for everyone

in this Legislature when I say we are losing a valued colleague. Lyn transcended the partisan politics that so often characterize this chamber. She didn't really care about putting cabinet ministers on the spot, and she didn't really care about making the government look bad. What she deeply cared about was the people in her riding and the people of this province. Everything she did in this Legislature, everything she said, was about them.

This is obviously a particularly sad day for our party. We're losing a former cabinet minister, obviously a former leader, but most of all, we're going to be seeing a great deal less of a very dear friend. Lyn has always been, as she is today, classy, compassionate, the best kind of friend and colleague you could possibly have. For myself, I'm losing a constant source of wisdom and support.

I want to tell you a story about our transition period—old leader giving way to new. I, of course, was taking over her office, and I'm sure you can imagine how awkward that might have been. Not with Lyn. When I got there, all her stuff was gone. Everything was in order. She'd cleaned it all out. There wasn't a sign that she'd been there, except in the top left-hand drawer of the desk I found one pair of pantyhose. That is the only time that Lyn has ever let me down. What was I going to do with those? My legs are obviously much longer.

The fact that Lyn is leaving politics is bad news for everybody in this province. Yes, she has represented Thunder Bay specifically and she has worked with us particularly, but she worked tirelessly for all the people of Ontario. She has always put the public need first. She's been a leader, a minister and a critic, but more than anything else, she's been an advocate for her constituents and an advocate for this entire province. If everyone in Ontario practised politics the way Lyn McLeod has, this province would be a better place.

So it's only fair that after so many years of service to the people of this province, she is now free to spend some time with her family. I'm pleased to report that that family is growing. I'm happy to tell you that Lyn's daughter Robin has recently given birth to a healthy little girl. I don't think it will take long for little Mia to realize she has one terrific grandmother.

1610

I want to end by saying something on behalf of all of us to our friend Lyn. We're going to miss you a great deal, Lyn. You've been a dear friend, a great supporter and a constant inspiration. I think you embody what public service should be. I could go on and on, but what I really want to say boils down to this: the best of luck to you, Neil, the children, the grandchildren. Thanks to the family for sharing you with us for these many years. On behalf of our party, this Legislature, your constituents and this great province of ours, thank you for all you've brought to us.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): As the party whip for the New Democratic caucus, I'm happy to join here today in saying a few words about Lyn McLeod. I want to echo something Mr McGuinty said at

the very beginning. Lyn has always been one who has brought a certain level-headedness to all the debates she's come into. I've never seen Lyn lose it in the time I've been here, through three elections. She's always kept focused. She's always remembered what her job was as party leader or as a member asking a question, and never made things personal. Sometimes that's something we forget in this business, and that's one of the things I want to thank her for.

I have to say about Lyn, though, that she's got something about the number four. Lyn has been married for 40 years now, she has four children, four grandchildren and she's leaving after four elections. Maybe it's a numeral thing that Lyn is trying to explain to us, that she's hoping for something else to happen with fours. I was wondering to myself, if your favourite number is four and you're going into retirement, what's the other four about? I hope you're able to respond to that a little bit later.

I know, as Dalton indicated earlier, that Lyn became the proud grandparent of her fourth grandchild. You had to see Lyn the day she came into the House. That, to her, and rightfully so, was the biggest thing that was going on in her life. It didn't matter what was going on inside the Legislature. She remembers that at the end of day her family is everything. She was just beaming. You knew something had happened when she walked in the door, and it had to be good news, because she was just beaming with such pride. I remember going down to her and saying, "Lyn, what happened?" I thought it was because she was leaving and she was excited or something. It was all about her fourth grandchild.

I have to say, Lyn, that the first time I met you—you probably don't remember—you were the name on the sign. You see, at Kamiskotia mine, when you were Minister of Natural Resources, you had to sign an order telling people not to go on the abandoned mine site. Back in those days—and I think this was a wise move—they used to put the name of the minister on the signs. My cottage is at Kamiskotia Lake, and every time I went by the old Kamiskotia mine I would see Lyn McLeod's name on that sign as Minister of Natural Resources. One of the stupidest things Bob Rae ever did was to get rid of that rule. Ministers were not allowed under our government to put their names on the signs. For the whole time we were in government and the first term of the Conservatives in government, your name stayed on that sign, for almost 12 years, and I've got to tell you, I'm glad I finally got it down. I just say that in passing. I think it's kind of cute.

I also have to say that a lot of people come to this place and are sometimes a bit beyond themselves when it comes to what they are here for. As a fellow northerner, I've got to say I'm going to miss you because we're only but 10. There are 10 people from northern Ontario between our two caucuses who are here to represent the largest geographical part of this province. We know the challenges we face in northern Ontario, and that's for another debate, but it's been good to have somebody like

Lyn from northern Ontario, albeit not in my party but in the Liberal caucus, because we've been able to say, "It's not just us; it's also Lyn McLeod and other people in northern Ontario who speak to the same issues."

Losing an experienced person on the front benches of the Liberal Party is going to be a loss for northern Ontario. I think we need to acknowledge that because it takes a long time in this business to become really effective in this job.

You have been very effective in your voice, not only for Thunder Bay but for northern Ontario altogether. On behalf of my caucus and the rest of northern Ontario, we want to say that we're going to miss you. Having you help us out in northern Ontario has really been a good thing.

Applause.

Mr Bisson: You can applaud; it's all right, It's fine, it's good.

I also want to say the things you're not going to miss. I know Lyn. Like all of us in northern Ontario, you have to travel down here. I've seen you get on those flights to Thunder Bay when I've had to go up there. That's a long flight you've got to do every week. I'm sure you're not going to miss Air Canada, even though it's a good airline, and I'm sure that you want to give them business because we know they need business these days because of what's going on in the airline. But that's something you're not going to miss.

What you're also not going to miss in this particular job are the long times away from your family. You've been married, as I said at the beginning, for 40 years. You've got your children and grandchildren. One of the demands that is put on all of us in this Legislature is a lot of time from the family in order to devote yourself to your constituents. Your family has been supportive, obviously. They love you a lot and have supported your time in politics. We know this is going to be your chance to go back to your family and your community and to be part of them again and to share them and have them share you as you've not been able to do in your time in politics. We know this going to be your chance to go back to your family and your community and be part of them again and to share them and have them share you as you have not been able to do while you have had this time in politics.

On behalf of all northerners, Lyn, on behalf of the New Democratic caucus and my leader, Howard Hampton, we wish you well. We know this is not adieu; it's only au revoir. Merci.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): It's a pleasure and an honour for me, on behalf of our government, to join with members of the other parties to recognize the tremendous accomplishments of Lyn McLeod, the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan. I first met Lyn when I came here in 1990. I have to tell you, Lyn, that since that time I have certainly developed a tremendous personal respect and admiration for you, your dedication, your hard work, your compassion, your commitment to your constituents and all

the people in the province of Ontario, and your love for your family.

Since 1987, whether as an MPP, a minister or a leader of your party, you have worked tirelessly on behalf of each and every person in this province. In fact, when your leader spoke, I thought to myself that so many of the attributes he gave to you were certainly attributes that I consider when I think of you as well. In all your endeavours, you have certainly earned the admiration, respect and trust of your colleagues on all sides of the House.

Before you came to this Legislature, I knew of you by reputation. You were a highly respected trustee, and you were chair of your local school board. Of course, we had that in common. But it's at the provincial level that Lyn has certainly left a very impressive legacy and mark on the people of this province. When she served as Minister of Colleges and Universities, she was responsible for the creation of Ontario's first French-language college. She also left her mark when she served as Minister of Natural Resources and Minister of Energy.

But, you know, it was when Lyn served as the health critic for the Liberal party that I really gained a tremendous amount of insight as to who you are and what you believed in. I can tell you that she fought very hard to ensure that the issues around health care and the concerns of the people in the province of Ontario continued to be a priority for us and for our government. She certainly kept me on my feet a great deal of the time. But she didn't do it for political purposes; she didn't do it for the 30-second sound bite. She asked her questions because she really cared about the people who were involved. She asked her questions in a very thoughtful, meaningful and respectful way. She was truly looking for answers to problems. She was always balanced and measured in her questions. In everything she has done as a member, she has continued to demonstrate that concern, that compassion and that desire to get answers to help the people with whom she works.

In a place where politics plays an important role, I would agree with Mr McGuinty that Lyn has truly always transcended party politics. She always knew when it was time to put the politics aside, and she's always been able to recognize the achievements that were made by individuals in this House, parties in this House and various governments.

I know that many times when I was Minister of Health, rather than bring issues to the floor of this House, Lyn approached me and we were able to quietly find solutions to the problems that faced the people in this province.

You know, Lyn, one of the things that people in this province are going to remember more than anything else is the fact that you were the very first woman to win the leadership of a political party. We are proud of you. You served with distinction for almost four years, between 1992 and 1996. Lyn, in doing so, you raised the bar for all women in the province of Ontario. Your daughters must be so proud of you. By becoming leader of your

party, you have made it easier for other women to follow in your footsteps, and we do appreciate that.

1620

Lyn, in everything you have accomplished, we know that you have been supported by your family. I think that's been pointed out as well. We know that family really has played a big part in your life. I also know from personal experience that being a politician can be tough. You're a politician, you're a mother, you're a wife. It was more difficult for you than for many others. Some of us can go home every night, but you have been commuting for 16 years to Thunder Bay. We appreciate that dedication and commitment.

On behalf of our caucus, I want to recognize and congratulate you and Neil on celebrating your 40th year of marriage this year. Politics sometimes takes people apart, but I know that in your case it has brought you closer, and we certainly are pleased to be able to congratulate you. We want to extend our warmest wishes to you.

As you move into the next chapter of your life we also hope that you're going to get that extra time to spend with your husband, your four daughters, your wonderful grandsons and granddaughters. I know that your family has to be very proud of all that you've accomplished here, Lyn. I know they're going to appreciate the fact that you're going to have more time for them in the future.

Lyn, on behalf of our caucus, as we reflect on your many years of selfless public service and advocacy on behalf of the people of this province, we wish to extend to you our warmest wishes for the future.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I must confess to finding this a nostalgic and difficult moment and rather overwhelming, as much as I appreciate the very generous remarks that have just been made by my leader, by Mr Bisson—who certainly understands the challenges of coming from northern Ontario; the commute, as well as the particular geographical challenges of addressing the riding's needs—and Liz Witmer.

Liz, I thank you for your comments. I want to particularly thank you for a time that you will remember well when you kept a personal promise and you opened your door to truly listen to my constituents. It meant a great deal, and with my respect for you, I add my particular thanks for that occasion.

To Dalton, I won't go on at great length other than to say it's been tremendous working with you. In addition to the fact that I left you a clean office, you've given me the courtesy of having enough confidence to have me hanging around as a former leader for six years. That's been a wonderful experience for me.

I should perhaps have advised people that this is the third time that I've left politics forever. I haven't thought about the number four, Gilles, but I am not planning on making it a fourth time that I leave politics forever. I will break the cycle of fours on this one.

There's a lot that could be said; there's probably much that should be said on an occasion like this. I'm going to refrain because I'm not going to abuse the privilege of having been given a few minutes to respond.

I do want to say that I'm going to miss a lot about this place. It's hard to itemize the things you'll miss, because I think I'll probably come to absorb that, assuming that retirement is imminent. As I've said to my colleagues, I'll feel even stranger after this should we be back here sometime in September.

Assuming that this is my last opportunity to be in the House, I can tell you I'm going to miss the collegiality of working with a caucus, of working with colleagues of the Legislature who share a commitment and see politics as truly public service.

I think I'm going to particularly miss—I know I'm going to miss—the experience of coming to work in an environment where you don't know what's going to happen on any given day. Life outside may seem a little bit dull at times, I suspect. I'm going to miss the chance to advocate for things I really care about, because this is a unique forum that gives us that opportunity on a regular basis.

You're right, Gilles: I will not miss the weekly commute. I'm looking forward to sitting down on a Monday morning to have a cup of coffee instead of catching an airplane.

Mr Bisson: And watching the plane go.

Mrs McLeod: Right over my roof. I suspect the novelty of that will last all of one Monday and I'll be ready to get back to work in some way.

I will very much miss being the representative for Thunder Bay-Atikokan. Mr Bisson has touched on the way we northerners tend to feel. I suppose it's not just a northern thing, Gilles, but I'm very proud of my home and very proud of my region. I feel I've been very privileged to be a northern representative in this Legislature.

When I first came to the Legislature—I'm not going to tell a lot of stories, Mr Speaker, but I couldn't help remembering as Gilles spoke that when I first came I carried around this sort of postcard drawing. I'm not a very good drawer at the best of times, but it was a postcard drawing where I tried to show the province of Ontario on one page so that people would get some idea of the geographic realities of where I came from in northwestern Ontario. One of my earliest political battles was with Ian Scott, trying to convince him, with due respect to my colleagues from Sudbury, that a law administration office in Sudbury simply couldn't deal with the challenges of serving Thunder Bay. I happened to have won that particular fight; I've lost a few of those on the same subject since then. But I truly hope that by being here I've helped to raise awareness of some of the realities of the needs of people in northwestern Ontario.

People talked about my being the first woman leader. My feelings about being a woman in politics are much too complex to even begin to get into today, but I can tell you that at the outset the experience of being the first woman—at that point, the only woman—representative to come from northwestern Ontario was at least as interesting at times as being the first woman leader of a party.

I do have to confess to my constituents back home, now that I'm leaving, that I did not know a lot about

moose tags when I was first elected. I think I've improved my knowledge base on that score since then.

Let me just say, as my colleague John Cleary said a little bit earlier today when he touched on the fact that none of us is here without volunteers, that none of us achieves anything in politics without absolutely tremendous support.

People have touched on my family. I won't go on at length, because I could. My incredible husband, who for 16 years now, believe it or not, has done all of my constituency events on weekends with me, including the millennium anniversary of Poland, which was three hours on a hot Sunday afternoon in Polish—rather, it was on the Ukraine. It was all done in Ukrainian, and there was a football game on television at home at the time. That is real commitment.

My four daughters have not only survived having a mom in politics all of their lives but have become very much involved in political life and very engaged in public issues of the day.

But I do think it's probably a good idea to retire as you start getting little grandkids around. My eldest grandson, when he was just a little guy, happened to see me on television one day. I guess it was one of those times when people might not have thought I was quite as non-partisan as you've suggested I have been. Benjamin looked at the television and he said, "That's not Grandma Lyn." I think he would find it a little bit more difficult to accept my role as time goes on.

I lastly want to say a word about the flip side of all that we hear about cynicism about politics and politicians. As leader of our party, I had an opportunity to visit almost every community in the province and to witness the volunteer effort of people in communities across the province. I was always overwhelmed, and I am still overwhelmed, by the sheer commitment of time, talent and resources that people commit just because they believe that what we do here in the Legislature matters. I know that's true not just for my party; it's true for every party. I know, without making too grandiose a statement about it, our very democracy is sustained by that kind of effort. I continue to be humbled by those efforts. I continue to be grateful for them, as I indeed am grateful for the opportunity of having been a member of the Parliament of the province of Ontario. Thank you very much.

1630

The Deputy Speaker: It would seem to me, Lyn, that over the last couple of days we've had the pleasure of giving tribute to three very worthy members. I wouldn't want to make any conclusion from it other than, from my observation, that it must be those with short first names. Yesterday it was Sean and today it's John and Lyn. That's the only conclusion I'll make. You will be truly missed.

Further debate?

Mr Bisson: I continue where my colleague left off yesterday in regard to this particular budget bill. I want to come at this from a northerner's perspective because, as

you know, we just paid tribute to Lyn McLeod in regards to her service in northern Ontario. I just want to come back to some of the issues that are facing us in northern Ontario.

Some of the members may not know this because they might not have read it in the papers. It's not something that was written in the *Toronto Star*, the *Globe and Mail*, the *Toronto Sun* or *Now* magazine. Northern Ontario over the past five years has lost pretty well 10% of its population. That is very, very troubling to all of our communities. You've got communities from north-western to northeastern Ontario who have seen their overall population, on average, diminish by 10%, and that's quite startling. We northerners are concerned because it means that the very fabric of what makes our communities is starting to go away and move south.

We have children, as I do—I've got two girls. Julie, who's 26 and a nurse, now lives here in Toronto and is going back to U of T to become a nurse practitioner, of which we're quite proud. The reality is that she probably won't return to northern Ontario. I have another daughter, Natalie, who is—help me, Natalie—21 or 22. Oh God, a father never knows these things. She's in her second year of university so she must be 21. She's doing both a history and a psychology major. Hopefully, Natalie will stay in Timmins, because she's choosing a profession that will make it a little bit easier for her to stay in northern Ontario and probably go into teaching.

I speak as a parent and as a representative of northern Ontario when I look at our kids leaving northern Ontario in big numbers. It hurts us from the perspective of the family, because we want to know in our retirement years, as we retire in our communities, as would anybody else in this province, that we can have our children and our grandchildren around us as our kids grow up and go away. Unfortunately, in too many of our communities, the kids are leaving and the grandparents are following their children and their grandchildren away from the northern communities into southern Ontario to be able to keep in touch with their families.

The reason for that is very simple: the economy of northern Ontario is hurting. You've heard me and Madame Martel and Monsieur Hampton and Tony Martin and other northern members, Lyn McLeod and others, raise this issue on a number of occasions in the House. We say to the government, you made a fundamental decision in 1995, upon coming to power, that you were going to take a non-interventionist approach to the northern and provincial economy and that you were going to allow market forces to dictate what happens when it comes to economic development around Ontario.

Let me tell you that for Toronto, Hamilton, Oshawa and the bigger centres in southern Ontario there are certain dynamics, and no matter what a government does, there will be economic development. Just by the very nature of the large population in those areas, the large infrastructure, the amount of capital that's available in places like Toronto and others, the economy is going to keep on going no matter what a government does. But in

remoter communities in places like northern Ontario, it's a much different thing. If you're in the town of Opasatika or Sioux Lookout, how do you attract economic development into those communities? You're lucky if you've got a highway that comes into your community. I represent communities in my riding, as does my leader, Howard Hampton, that don't even have highways. They're only serviced by way of air, and sometimes by barge if conditions are right. How do you attract economic development in those communities if the government is not playing an activist role to help the economies of those communities develop?

We all know that without economic development there isn't the kind of renewal you need to keep your economy going. As businesses go on in years, businesspeople retire. Maybe the product they are selling is no longer in vogue. It might be a mine and the minerals are depleted. For a number of issues, some of those places close down in the natural cycle of things, and you need to have something come in and take their place. If there's one thing I can be extremely critical of this government about, it is their entire approach to economic development in northern Ontario. I want to tell you as a northerner that what you are doing by way of your non-interventionist approach is really—there's no other way of putting it—hurting northern Ontario and northern families.

We in the New Democratic Party have presented a number of issues in our Public Power platform that deal with those particular issues we have to deal with. For example, one of the very fundamental things for northern Ontario is energy. Our leader, Howard Hampton, has led the charge over the last year and a half, pointing out the folly of the government's approach to energy policies in the province by way of opening up the market, deregulating and trying to privatize our hydro industry. As a result of that, we have all kinds of effects in northern Ontario.

I come from the city of Timmins. The largest electricity consumer in the province is Falconbridge in the city of Timmins. Last summer, when you first opened the market, I was getting phone calls in the month of August and the later part of July, where Falconbridge was on the phone with me, or the union through CAW, saying, "Energy prices are peaking. We are having to shut the plant down today, because we cannot afford to operate with these hydro rates." They would have to shut the plant down at the last second and hope and wait until the electricity prices came back down, and once the prices came back down restart the plant again, only to see them spike once more. It was this constant cycle of turning things on and off that was a money-losing venture for Falconbridge.

As a result—and I'm not saying it's the only issue but it's one of the key issues—Falconbridge has decided not to operate this summer. They are saying that for a period of three months this summer they are going to be shutting down part of their operation at the metallurgical site and

laying off some 285 workers on a temporary basis and 85 workers on a permanent basis.

I want to give some credit to the union, CAW, and management on this one. They've managed to absorb some of the temporary layoffs by displacing the contractors and allowing the workers who work at Kidd Creek under CAW contract to do some of the jobs those contractors were doing. But I want to point out that the net effect is the contractors and their families aren't going to have jobs, and we're losing over 300 jobs this summer from just one employer because of energy prices in northern Ontario.

1640

The sawmill in Cochrane—partly because of the American dollar; I'm not going to say for a second that it's all hydro, but hydro is a big part of it—is having to look at their bottom line. They're saying, "We've got this trade war with the United States where they're unjustly penalizing us by way of tariff. We've got an American dollar that's basically going down, which pushes the Canadian dollar up, and as a result, things are pretty tight." I talk to these companies, and they're telling me that one of the big costs of doing business in those types of operations is electricity. With electricity prices going up as they have, it's just making the decision whether to close their operation, on a temporary or permanent basis, much easier.

Tony Martin and I went through Sault Ste Marie about two weeks ago when we started our northern tour. We went to communities like Wawa, where employers like River Gold, a mining operator in Wawa, told us that because energy prices were 75% higher in Wawa because of the company that's there, they ended up being unable to invest \$200 million of what would be exploration dollars next year to firm up new reserves for the mine to continue.

Now, some people in southern Ontario will say, "Well, it didn't displace any jobs." Let me tell you what this does. A mine is a finite ore body. You must spend money in exploration and development to bring on new sites within the mine in order to keep the tonnage up and operate your mill. If you're not spending money each and every year on exploration, it's the beginning of the end. You know that the mine is going to close in a fairly short period of time.

How do I know that? I come out of the mining industry. I worked at the Pamour group and I worked for Noranda. I worked at McIntyre, Delnorte, and a number of other mining properties in our communities. One of the ways that I knew my employer was going to close is they stopped spending money on exploration. As a result, about five years later, the place closed down. The point I make to you is that every dollar that an employer has to spend on higher energy costs is affecting jobs, immediately or later, within the mining industry.

We went to Dubreuilville. We talked to the mill manager, Dave—I forget his last name—community leaders, the mayor and the people with the IWA, the International Woodworkers of America. They were very

categorical in what they had to say. They said, "A 75% increase in energy prices is leading to 280 jobs being lost in that community." As we went into White River, it was the same story. The entire mill is shutting down for six months to a year.

I come back to my first point. Northern Ontario is losing jobs, and I would argue that one of the reasons we're seeing job losses is this government's energy policies, but it's also because this government has no economic development policies when it comes to assisting northern Ontario communities.

We in the New Democratic Party of Ontario, through the leadership of our leader, Howard Hampton, have put forward in our public policy document, our platform document called Public Power, a number of initiatives that would help stimulate growth in northern Ontario. One of the very first things that we would do on forming a government is stop the deregulation and privatization of Ontario hydro and stabilize the rates once more, so that not only industrial users, but commercial and civic users are able to pay a better price for hydro than they're paying now.

In fact, I was on the telephone today with a gentleman who bought a hotel in the city of Timmins. As a result of your high energy prices, his bill went to \$51,000 in the month of January, and he had similar bills for February and March. Ontario Hydro is now telling him that they're shutting off his power as of tomorrow. So all of the workers in that hotel in Timmins are going to be without a job if we don't find a resolution to this by tomorrow morning. My staff and I have been on the phone pretty well most of the day talking to hydro officials, trying to come up with some sort of solution. But that's the net effect of what you're doing. That particular operation probably employs about 20 people. That's another 20 jobs in our city. The list goes on and on with regard to what you guys are doing.

As I said at the very beginning, the government has to have an interventionist role when it comes to economic development in northern Ontario. That's why we propose in our platform document, Public Power, to utilize the Ontario heritage fund the way it was supposed to be used in the first place: to give loans to businesses in northern Ontario and assist them to finance themselves toward the expansion or the creation of new opportunities in northern Ontario that create jobs.

As it is now, and most northerners will know this, if you're trying to get money for a commercial loan in northern Ontario, you can't get it. The banks won't give it to you. Why? Because of their monetary policies, banks have decided that when it comes to commercial property they will not make loans in northern Ontario because of the out-migration. So somebody has got to step up to the plate and assist existing businesses and assist those trying to start businesses in northern Ontario to capitalize themselves when they're trying to set up a project.

One of the things we're saying is that we would take the \$60 million a year, plus the \$260 million that they

haven't spent in the heritage fund up to now, and we would immediately make that available to businesses in northern Ontario to secure loans with banks in order to get projects off the ground across our communities in northern Ontario.

We would make sure we have a good transportation infrastructure, because that's one of the keys. Ontario Northland has to remain within public hands. We need to make sure Ontario Northland is there providing very good, affordable rates for transportation of goods that are being transported in and out of northern Ontario.

Quite frankly, I believe that in southern Ontario, Ontarians don't think for two seconds about total subsidization of transportation for industry in southern Ontario by way of Highway 400, 401 and others. I wouldn't argue for total subsidization for Ontario Northland customers, but we need to do something to bring their transportation costs down so they don't become a stumbling factor in keeping operations in northern Ontario. I know, in talking to a number of customers—industrial users—along the ONR, that they're saying, "The rates are one of the issues that are making us look at doing some of our operations in southern Ontario or elsewhere."

I say to this government: a failing grade on economic development in northern Ontario. We will take the reins, if you're not prepared to, in order to deal with the very pressing issues of northern Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Hon Doug Galt (Minister without Portfolio): I was interested in listening to the member from Timmins-James Bay. With all we've been hearing lately about smog and the concern about coal-burning plants and the concern about the environment that comes from the third party, I was sure they would be talking about some of the recommendations that came from the select committee on alternative fuels and some of the things that are in this bill, such as a 10-year property tax holiday for new facilities that generate electricity from natural gas, alternative or renewable sources. I was sure they would have been on to something like that, and complimenting the government, because the member for Toronto-Danforth sat on that select committee. Some of these were her ideas, and even if they weren't her ideas, she certainly supported them very enthusiastically.

I thought he would have been talking about the immediate 100% corporate income tax write-off for investments by businesses in qualifying energy-efficient equipment. I was sure he would want to talk about some of these things that would encourage consumers to use alternate fuels and thereby improve the environment. I'm disappointed that they missed some of those items.

They also missed a year's retail sales tax rebate to purchasers of certain new energy-efficient household appliances, which will help conserve electricity. I was sure that point would have been brought in; as well, the five-year retail sales tax rebate to individuals who purchase qualifying solar energy systems.

These are all things that would have minimal pollution. Some of it may have a little bit of pollution in the construction of it; there may be a little bit of visual pollution. But it's a long way from the coal-fired plants they're so concerned about. I was sure they would have been commenting on some of the tax savings that are in this particular bill.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): When the member for Timmins-James Bay was speaking earlier this afternoon in tribute to Lyn McLeod, he made reference to the fact that as northern members we share a lot of common interests and tend to be fighting for the same issues and, quite frankly, regardless of political parties, it really is the case. I think that was reflected very much in the remarks he just made. I was checking them off as he was speaking and nodding very much in agreement. I wish I had more time to comment.

Certainly in reference to the northern Ontario heritage fund, I think it has become almost farcical how it is now being used by the government basically as a means to fund programs and services that may be very, very valuable but should be coming from the Ministry of Health or the Ministry of Municipal Affairs. It's awful what has happened.

The heritage fund in its original form was extremely valuable in helping businesses in the north. A different understanding is needed in terms of what's needed in the north. He articulated that very, very well. That's one of the things that we intend to do as well. It's wonderful to have support for an MRI in any community in the north, but it should be coming from the Ministry of Health budget, as opposed to the northern Ontario heritage fund.

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When one looks at the reality in terms of population loss we've seen in the north, we do need to have a government that understands the economic development needs of the north. This government has failed abysmally. I just spent earlier this week travelling from Thunder Bay up to Nakina for a wonderful graduation ceremony. The road between Geraldton and Nakina is, frankly, in such horrid shape that it's truly frightening for every resident there. The infrastructure needs must be improved, there's no question about that. We have to recognize that if we want to really, really attract people to the north, there needs to be a road structure that at least is treated the same way as it is here in southern Ontario. I'm running out of time, but I thank the member for his comments. I thought they were spot-on. We certainly have to continue to fight to make sure this government or the new government better understands what our needs are.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I want to reinforce some of the comments that were made by my colleague from Timmins-James Bay. We're dealing with a budget bill, which is a bill that should deal with government initiatives. If the government cared at all about what's happening in northern Ontario, the initiative we would be dealing with here today is the cancellation of hydro privatization and deregulation.

The fact of the matter is, hydro privatization and deregulation is a job killer in northern Ontario. That is a fact. Let me repeat some of the numbers that my colleague read into the record to reinforce how true this is. In his community of Timmins-James Bay, 300 people attached to Falconbridge are going to lose their jobs; they're going to be laid off for at least 13 weeks. Another 85 people have received permanent layoff notices, so they and their families are affected. As a result of what's happening in Cochrane at the sawmill, a hundred jobs are being lost. In Dubreuilville, 340 jobs are being lost. In White River, the entire mill is being shut down: 285 jobs. Tembec in Kirkland Lake is being affected. I don't have those job numbers; I believe it's over 100. In Thunder Bay you've got 400 workers who have been laid off from Buchanan's Northern Wood and Great West Timber mills. That's just what we're dealing with right now. And because of the report that was put out by the Independent Market Operator, we know that things are going to get a whole lot hotter and a whole lot worse, because the government doesn't have energy reserves to deal with the hot weather this summer. Hydro privatization and deregulation is killing jobs in northern Ontario. People are losing their livelihoods. Communities are at risk. If this government wanted to do anything important today, they would announce cancellation of Hydro deregulation and privatization.

Hon Tina R. Molinari (Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I'm happy to be involved in debating Bill 41, An Act to implement Budget measures. The people in my riding of Thornhill are very pleased with the way this government spends the money that we take from our taxpayers. Like any individual who works and has bills and expenses, it's important that you pay for what you can afford, that you don't spend more than the money you take in. This government is made up of fiscal responsibility. We have implemented over 225 tax cuts. There are 17 tax cuts in this budget. We have had five balanced budgets and we've paid \$5 billion toward the debt. That's what responsibility is all about: being able to put more money into the pockets of the taxpayers, providing an environment in Ontario that creates more jobs. The economy is booming. It allows us to invest in the priority areas such as health care and education.

From my riding of Thornhill, there were several people here today applauding the government on our initiative on the education tax credit, because there are a lot of people in the province who choose to send their children to a school other than the one that's publicly funded by the government. I was pleased to see that we also had some support from the opposition, from those who believe it's important that parents have choice.

Besides money and investments in Ontario, one very important thing we've done through the Ministry of Health is to implement Telehealth. The number for that is 1-866-797-0000. I had the opportunity of taking advantage of this not too long ago, and it's an excellent way to provide service for people and get fewer people in the emergency rooms.

The Deputy Speaker: Response?

Mr Bisson: A way to get fewer people in the emergency rooms? Where I come from, we'd be happy to have even a first-aid station. Telehealth: come and talk to some of the communities I represent where there are inadequate health services because they don't even have a hospital.

The northern members who spoke—Mr Gravelle and Ms Martel—get it. I'm not going to take any time with what they're saying. It's clear the government doesn't get it. The government's response is, "Look at us. We've done—"

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): What did you guys do for the north?

Mr Bisson: Listen to this guy, Mr Beaubien. Don't even waste time with him.

When it comes to the government, their line is, "Look at us. We've done eight years of tax cuts and corporate tax cuts and look how good it's working." We've lost 10% of our population over the last five years when we've had those tax cuts, so obviously that's not working for northern Ontario.

Furthermore, a corporate tax cut implies that the company is making some money. A tax cut doesn't work for a corporation unless they're profitable. Most of these outfits are closing down or laying off. They're not making any money. You guys don't get it.

Hydro prices are putting businesses out of work. I'm dealing with a small business in my riding right now that is going to lay off about 20 people by the end of this week because they couldn't afford to pay the exorbitant rates of hydro that they were charged because of your bungled deregulation. This person is sitting back and saying, "What am I going to do? I either don't pay my payroll, at which point I lose my employees, or I don't pay my hydro, at which point Hydro shuts off my power and I'm out of business anyway." Here we are scrambling to try to do something to keep that business afloat. There's absolutely no program, no policy to assist them.

I say to the government, you missed the point. In economies like northern Ontario, you have to have an interventionist approach. You have to have a heritage fund that loans money to businesses that are in need, loans that are repayable. What you guys have done up until now has led to the depopulation of northern Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): It's certainly my pleasure to add my voice to the discussion about the Right Choices Act, 2003, and how our government's economic plan continues, I believe, to support Ontario taxpayers and businesses. Without strong businesses, we're not going to be able to help our taxpaying communities.

Mr Beaubien: That certainly includes the businesses in northern Ontario.

Ms Mushinski: It does indeed. I agree with you, my honourable friend from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. It certainly does include those businesses in the north.

Since our government took office in 1995, this province has made remarkable gains in jobs and economic prosperity. We know that jobs are created when the economy grows. The economy grows when Ontarians have more money to spend and more money to invest. The best and the fairest way to make sure Ontarians have that money is to not tax it away in the first place. Now does that sound like a familiar story? For eight years, 225 tax cuts; 65 tax increases in the 10 lost years for both the NDP and the Liberal governments, and we lost 10,000 jobs as a result of it.

1700

You see, governments do not create wealth and prosperity; people do. It is government's role to create the right conditions for Ontario's citizens and businesses to flourish. Tax cuts are central to our plan for promoting prosperity. How many times do we have to say that? The Right Choices Act takes further steps to ensure that this successful economic plan continues.

Our experience over the last eight years has been that tax reductions have led to more and more revenue, not less.

Interjection: No, no; tax, tax, tax—

Ms Mushinski: I can remember Mr Philips, the education critic—I know I was heckling him a little bit last Thursday but it was really hard not to. This was the same individual who kept saying, "Tax cuts will never work. You'll drive away jobs and you'll do this and you'll do that." In the meantime, this was the guy who represented a government that brought in 34 or 35 tax increases, including the infamous commercial concentration tax. I was on Scarborough council. I can remember all the members of council, the Liberal members of council, no less—one is actually running in Scarborough right now—were absolutely outraged that this Liberal government would be putting this kind of tax in the most commercially vibrant area of the country, which was Metropolitan Toronto at the time. They were going to put on this job-killing tax, and guess what? That's exactly what they achieved.

The government's agenda of tax cuts and sound economic and fiscal management has benefited the people of this province. I keep hearing all this doom and gloom across the way about what dreadful policies have led to lost opportunities and jobs in the north. I can honestly tell you that my constituents in the great riding of Scarborough Centre would tell you differently. In fact, our ranking in a recent Statistics Canada survey of household spending reflects Ontario's rising incomes and the fact that more people are working. Since 1995, the average after-tax family income in the province has risen by nearly 17%. Ontario has created more than one million net new jobs, which account for 46.8% of the country's economic growth. Almost 50% of the country's economic growth has happened right here in Ontario. Ontario's economy is the largest in the country, and family incomes in this province are the highest in Canada.

Perhaps the most important reason that Ontario's economy continues to be one of the strongest in North America is consumer confidence. Almost 85% of our gross domestic product growth during the last six years has come from domestic spending. I think this is critical, because Ontarians are spending and Ontarians are investing. Healthy consumer spending has spurred economic growth over the past two years, and it's supported by reduced taxes and low interest rates. Rising employment and higher after-tax incomes are expected to sustain consumer spending during 2003-04.

From the second quarter of 1996, when Ontario income tax cuts began, Ontario's real disposable income increased—get this—by 22.8%, significantly stronger than the 18.7% pace for the rest of Canada.

Interjection.

Ms Mushinski: Why, as my good friend from Sarnia-Lambton says? Because of tax cuts. During the same period, Ontario real consumption increased by 28.2%, again ahead of the 22.1% recorded in the rest of Canada. Where are the most jobs being created? Right here in Ontario. Real consumption rose 3.3% in 2002, led by strong sales of furniture, appliances and autos. Real consumer spending growth is projected to be 3.4% in 2003 and 3.5% in 2004. I should state that these are conservative projections, supported by gains in real disposable income of 3.5% in 2003 and 4.5% in 2004.

The healthy financial position of Ontario families will underpin sustained growth in consumer spending. A growing economy and tax cuts have raised the real average family after-tax income by 17% since 1995 to \$62,062.

Furthermore, from 1996 to 1998, this government cut Ontario's personal income rate—again, something that is very often conveniently forgotten, especially by the Liberals on that side—by more than 30%. Of course, we know they don't believe in tax cuts. They believe in raising taxes, and certainly all the commitments they have made going into a possible provincial election would indicate they're going to have to raise taxes again.

I am pleased to say that the Ernie Eves government is phasing in a further 20% personal income tax cut. Why? Again, because we know that tax cuts create jobs. This year, no other province in Canada charges lower rates of personal income tax than Ontario on most taxpayers earning less than \$60,000. Personal income tax cuts are one of the Eves government's pro-growth plans to promote economic development and financial security, which, as we have witnessed, allows us to make further investments in our priorities. We know what those priorities are—the sacred social programs of this country: health care and education.

The Right Choices Act proposes to reduce taxes further for taxpayers with low to moderate incomes. Indeed, the 2003 budget's proposal to enrich the Ontario tax reduction program would increase to 700,000 the number of people no longer paying Ontario income tax as a result of our government's personal income tax cuts

since 1995—700,000 people. Again, for some reason the federal Liberals continue to tax this low-income group.

Since we started cutting taxes, our tax revenues have increased by \$16 billion. Let me take a moment to tell this House how our economic plan has worked successfully since 1995. We've gone from a potential \$11.3-billion deficit to five consecutive balanced budgets. With the 2002-03 surplus of \$524 million, we have achieved our target to reduce debt by \$5 billion from 1998-99 levels. What's more, Ontario has received nine credit-rating improvements, including four upgrades to its long-term rating.

Interjection.

Ms Mushinski: Well, Mr Phillips certainly hasn't been reading the same financial forecasts we have.

Interjection.

Ms Mushinski: Since our election in 1995—this is my way of trying to put on the record my official heckles from last Thursday, Mr Speaker—more than one million net new jobs have been created for Ontarians, over 80% of them full time.

I can see that my colleagues on the government benches totally agree with everything I'm saying, because they're having so much fun there.

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Not surprisingly, given the strong job creation, more than 600,000 Ontarians have escaped social assistance since 1995. As I've often said, the best social program in this country is a job. Our economy has not only sustained growth, but it's also rebounded faster and stronger than our G7 trading partners, including, I might add, the United States of America. Our strong economy, fuelled by lower taxes, allows us to continue—

Mr Duncan: Let's hear it for Paul Martin.

Ms Mushinski: Yes, Paul Martin finally got it too, by the way—to invest more in health care, education, economic development and support for our small and medium-sized businesses, many of which we know, of course, prosper and grow in the north of Ontario.

The Right Choices Act will provide further tax relief to business by reducing the capital tax by 10% on January 1, 2004, and businesses that do not pay their taxes in a timely fashion will face serious consequences under the bill's proposals.

The bill also proposes a number of amendments that would encourage investment, particularly in small and medium-sized businesses, which we know are the engines that drive our economy.

The market conditions that are needed to support strong business investment are in place. Within this supportive economic environment, businesses of all sizes across a wide range of industries have contributed significantly to strong job growth in the province since 1995.

The Ernie Eves government understands that building a business environment that supports investment, job growth and prosperity requires strategic sector investments, support for innovation, strong capital markets and aggressive skills development, something I know the

Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities strongly supports and advocates.

That's why our 2003 budget proposes significant new measures that would give growing firms improved access to venture capital.

These are very important measures that I want to talk about.

First, we are proposing changes to the labour-sponsored investment funds program. This program is a significant source of venture capital for small and medium-sized businesses, having invested \$385 million in Ontario businesses last year.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa West-Nepean): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I ask for unanimous consent to move third reading of Bill 45.

The Deputy Speaker: The member seeks unanimous consent to move third reading of Bill 45. Is there consent? Agreed? I heard a no.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Ottawa West-Nepean asked for unanimous consent: third reading of Bill 45, An Act to establish a commission to inquire into the investigations by police forces of complaints of sexual abuse against minors in the Cornwall area. Is it agreed? I hear a no.

Ms Mushinski: I was speaking about venture capital and saying that small and medium-sized businesses invested \$385 million in Ontario businesses last year. What we're proposing would provide further support for companies that are having some difficulty raising venture capital by giving labour-sponsored investment funds greater flexibility in the investments they can make. The changes would allow labour-sponsored investment funds to invest up to 25% of their annual stock investments in companies listed on a stock exchange, up from the current 15%. It would also expand the definition of a small business to include businesses with \$6 million in assets. The Ontario government will also work with the federal government to increase the allowable maximum investment in a company. Changes to the community small business investment funds program are also being proposed through this bill.

As I mentioned earlier, we're proposing to reduce tax rates by 10% on January 1, 2004, and we intend to eliminate the capital tax by the time the federal government eliminates its capital tax. We believe that these measures would go a long way in further supporting our small and medium-sized businesses in the province. As well, we are proposing improvements to the Ontario business research institute tax credit. Our government has committed \$625 million over the next five years to support large-scale investments in strategic sectors, including the auto sector.

The Right Choices Act proposes a number of initiatives supporting economic prosperity by providing tax relief to individuals, cutting taxes and encouraging investment. The Ernie Eves government believes that it is essential that we carry on with our plan to support individuals and businesses in Ontario through balanced

budgets, lower taxes and competitive tax rates for business.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): There is one thing that's been made very clear to the people of Ontario over the last eight years of the Mike Harris-Ernie Eves revolution. A lot of people have been hurt by all these promises and this revolution. The revolution's call is always, "Tax cuts will solve everything. With tax cuts we'll have better health care—tax cuts, tax cuts."

We know there's a price to pay, and it's in service cuts. Tax cuts mean health care cuts mean education cuts and cuts to city services, because the money that goes to the top 1% in tax cuts has to come from somewhere. It comes from service cuts. For eight years we've seen non-stop cuts to our services. Ask people in the municipalities, "Are your streets any cleaner? Is your garbage picked up more?" and they'll all tell you, "Our parks are dirty, the weeds are long and the potholes are deeper." People get lost in potholes, they're so big in some parts of Toronto. They've downloaded those on to the municipalities, and basically you pay for those tax cuts in service cuts. You get less health service and then you have to pay for services out of your own pocket.

Interjection.

Mr Colle: The member from James Bay knows that you have to pay for those service cuts out of your own pocket.

In Toronto we've got Boys and Girls Clubs paying \$10,000 a year to play soccer on a soccer field at the local school. You have to pay \$3,000, \$4,000 or \$5,000 to play basketball on a school court. So you pay for these tax cuts through more user fees to use your own school gym. Then you pay more user fees for drugs, and then you can't even get even get into the hospitals because they're lined up right around the corner because emergencies have been closed down. That's what they mean by tax cuts: they mean service cuts.

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Ms Martel: I have heard during the course of the debate government members making reference to the government's balanced budget. I thought I would read this into the record from someone who normally would be fairly supportive of the government agenda. This comes from a column done by Christina Blizzard this morning. It says the following:

"Iraqi Information Minister Award: To Finance Minister Janet Ecker. Despite \$1 billion in SARS' costs, despite a drop in retail sales, despite the fact she has to find more than \$2 billion in 'sales and rentals,' and another \$700 million in savings, Ecker maintains the budget is still balanced. Yep, and there are no Americans in Baghdad."

I thought that was a pretty interesting comment to make about the budget, because I've heard government members, indeed I've heard Madam Ecker, on more than one occasion try to maintain that in fact the current budget is balanced. As we deal with a budget bill today, I

thought it was important to put that comment on the record—just how unbalanced the budget really is.

I also heard the current member talk about how some of the initiatives were going to promote prosperity in northern Ontario. I guess she didn't hear me talking about the job losses from killer hydro deregulation and privatization that are occurring right now in northern Ontario: 300 jobs in Timmins, layoffs for 13 weeks, 85 permanent; 100 jobs lost in Cochrane; 340 lost in Dubreuilville; 285 in White River; 400 in North Bay.

That's sure a sign of prosperity. Maybe the member should get out of Toronto and come to northern Ontario, come to some of these communities and try to give her dog-and-pony show around prosperity. Maybe she should talk to some of the workers who are losing their jobs and see what they have to say about this government's agenda.

Mr Beaubien: It's a pleasure for me to make a few comments on the speech of my colleague from Scarborough Centre. I would like to address some of the comments the members across have talked about concerning northern Ontario. They seem to assume this government doesn't care about northern Ontario. I think that's a fallacy.

If we look at what is happening in rural Ontario, there is no doubt we are facing some challenges in rural Ontario. You can talk about 200 jobs in Dubreuilville, and that's sad. There's no doubt it does have a tremendous impact on a small community. But I look at my own community of Sarnia-Lambton between 1989 and 1994—I don't remember who was in power at that time—and we lost 6,000 jobs.

This government is about tax cuts. There's no doubt about that, because we believe that the average Joe Q. Public can spend their dollars much more wisely than any government can. That's why, when we're talking about northern Ontario, this government saw fit to declare the entire northern part of Ontario an enterprise zone. There's no doubt that in the past number of years we have relied in northern Ontario on primary resources—the wood and mining industries—but we never put any value-added to the products. I think that, having an enterprise zone in northern Ontario, there are an awful lot of innovative and creative people in northern Ontario who will be able, with some financial assistance through lower taxes and with their creative minds, to add some value-added to the lumber and mining products.

As I said, this government is about tax cuts. There's no doubt we have to look at the record of the past eight years. We have created over a million new jobs in the province. If we look at the previous 10 years—let's concentrate on the previous five years—there were, net, 10,000 lost jobs in Ontario. Why was that? Because they saw fit to put more taxes on people, even the 5% tax that you dared to put on insurance premiums. Can you tell me why a government would tax insurance premiums?

Mr Duncan: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to respond to my colleague from Scarborough Centre,

whom I hold in the deepest of affection but couldn't disagree with more.

First of all, this is a government that has added more to the debt than any government than the Bob Rae government. They've added a net debt of approximately \$16 billion because they were cutting taxes when they were running a deficit. It doesn't add up. It's like paying a dividend when you make no profit.

Second, we have a deficit in this year's budget. We know that, the Toronto Dominion Bank knows that, the bond rating agencies know that, and that deficit is growing. That deficit, by our estimates, will come in somewhere around \$4 billion. Right now, by the government's own reckoning, there's \$2 billion in asset sales, assets which the government won't identify. There's another component of, I believe, \$700 million which is contingent on federal growth in revenues of some 6%. We know today from the federal finance minister that federal growth revenue projections are not going to meet their own expectations of 3.2%.

Finally, when I hear this government take credit for the prosperity of this province, I say "Phooey." What has led to our prosperity is productive workers, men and women in every part of this province who build cars efficiently, who build—

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I just wondered whether the word "phooey" is considered parliamentary.

The Deputy Speaker: That's not a point of order.

Mr Duncan: Don't take credit for something you didn't do. Give the working men and women of this province the credit for being the most efficient, productive, confident people in the world. That's what led to our prosperity. You just happened to be along for the ride.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Scarborough Centre has two minutes to reply.

Ms Mushinski: I'm very pleased to see that my speech elicited so many interesting responses from the member from Eglinton-Lawrence, the member from Nickel Belt, my esteemed colleague from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and the member from Windsor-St Clair, for whom, of course, I have a great deal of respect.

I know I can say to the member for Eglinton-Lawrence—he talks about doom and gloom and cuts in services. He needs to be reminded of the fact that when we took office in 1995 the annual health care budget was, I think, \$14.5 billion, give or take a couple of hundred thousand dollars. I can tell you that now, in the year 2003, that same annual budget is \$28 billion. So I would suggest to you, sir, that there has hardly been a significant cut in service; there has been a substantial increase in service, including putting in an MRI and renal dialysis into my local hospital—something that we had begged for from that government over there and your government for nine years and never got.

I would also remind him of the fact that it was the Toronto District School Board that actually destroyed, took down, dismantled every single playground in schoolyards on school property in Metropolitan Toronto,

only to have to spend \$150 million to re-erect all of those playgrounds. Why? Because they didn't read the small print. That's the kind of record we have from the local school board.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Colle: Today we're discussing the budget motion or bill by the Conservative government. I look over to my left and I see the member from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh and I just call him the member from Harrisons Corners. I guess Mr Guzzo has probably been to Harrisons Corners. It's just a suburb of Cornwall. I used to know a pretty good hockey player from there by the name of Macmillan. I think you're related to the Macmillans. These are real Ontarians. They don't necessarily all come from the big cities; they also come from the little communities like Harrisons Corners. They know what this government has done over the last eight years.

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They know that all this talk about tax cuts and tax cuts really ends up benefiting people maybe on Bay Street, people maybe on Rideau Street, but it doesn't really help the people in Harrisons Corners. They're still paying more for their property taxes. The snowplow hardly comes by any more. The local fire and police services don't have the resources they had before. That's what the people in Harrisons Corners know. They know the truth about all the spin-doctoring that goes on here at Queen's Park and Bay Street, where they hire these consultants. They paid the consultants, I think, \$600 million here last year—\$600 million to spin doctors and all these high-paid, three-piece consultants who don't help the people in Cornwall, don't help the people in Kemptville, don't help the people in Swansea or in my community of Eglinton-Lawrence in north Toronto.

That's what these tax cuts have done. For the most part, over eight years they've meant conflict, cuts, revolution, turnover to real people.

Look at our hospitals. I remember this guy, Duncan Sinclair, here in Toronto. He was the guru that Mike Harris had. This guy, Duncan Sinclair, was going to turn the health care system upside down and fix it. They don't talk about Duncan Sinclair any more because he was a disaster. He ended up costing the health care system billions of dollars, closed emergencies. We lost six emergency departments in Toronto. We could sure use them now. We lost 10 hospitals in the greater Toronto area from this guy, Duncan Sinclair. Did it save us any money? It didn't, because Mike Harris and Duncan Sinclair brought back the people they fired and paid them money when they brought them back as consultants after they fired them. That's where the money went in the revolution: changing things around without really posing any solutions. On the Liberal side we're looking for solutions, not revolution. We've had eight years of revolution based on this tax cut mantra, which basically, as I said before, means service cuts.

This government is now saying they're going to find \$500 million to take out of public schools to give to the

private schools. They say they're going to find another \$400 million or \$500 million to give seniors a tax cut. They're going to find \$700 million, they promise, on mortgages. There's no free lunch in Ontario. Where are they going to get this over \$2 billion in promises? Where is it going to come from?

I tell you where it's going to come from if they ever have the chance—and a lot of people are saying, "Not this time, Ernie," because they know that the money would come from services to real people. It would come from their hospital services. It would come from more user fees. It would certainly come from more cuts in municipal services and more downloading on to municipalities. Maybe now you get garbage pickup once a week. The way we're going, this government would probably download more things to the point where we would have garbage picked up once a month. The municipalities can't even afford to pick up garbage more than once a week, yet the property taxes are probably more than they were before the revolution started. What good is the revolution if you're paying more property taxes—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Colle: Mr Speaker, I can't. They're shouting.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Eglinton-Lawrence.

Mr Colle: I appreciate the call to order.

This Ernie Eves—I should say it's actually Jim Flaherty's platform that Ernie Eves has copied, because he ran on a different platform for leader. He said that everything Jim Flaherty asked for was stupid. Now he's got all of Jim Flaherty's promises. Maybe Jim Flaherty should basically run the campaign, for God's sake; they're his ideas. I just think that this government is promising all these billions of dollars, and on top of it, the astonishing thing is that the people of Ontario have been told, "Oh, by the way, we're also going to sell \$2.2 billion in public assets."

It's like the 407 that they sold before the last election. Sold? They gave it away to the Spanish consortium there. They said, "We're going to sell," but they're not telling the people of Ontario what they're going to sell. They have to somehow sell something. They could sell the LCBO; they could sell TVOntario; they could sell parkland—basically anything to make up a \$2.2-billion promise to balance their budget this year.

What are they going to sell? We've asked the Minister of Finance, Janet Ecker, time and time again, "What are you going to sell?" She said, "I'm not telling." She's refusing to tell the people of Ontario, who own these assets, which ones she's going to sell, because she knows she's probably got something up her sleeve, like another Highway 407 giveaway that she wants to give away. That's why she isn't telling. If she had something tangible that people would agree to, she'd be telling you. Yet in this budget they're not telling you what they're going to see. I think the people of Ontario should be outraged and should be asking the Minister of Finance and Minister Flaherty or Premier Eves what they're

going to sell. It belongs to the people of Ontario. We have the right to know.

They also say they're going to make another \$800 million in cuts to balance the budget too. That's \$3 billion in this budget. We have no idea what they're going to cut—and that's a lot of cuts. You can rest assured that when they're going to cut \$800 million in this budget, you know where it's going to come from: health care, education—your classrooms—and environmental protection.

In this budget, they refuse to disclose what they're going to cut to make this hypothetical budget balanced, because it isn't right now. There's a \$2.2-billion sale of assets they're not telling you about, and there's also over \$800 million in proposed cuts that they won't tell you about. It's just astonishing that they won't reveal this in the budget. If these things make sense, they would be in here. Obviously they're not in the budget because they make no fiscal sense and they make no sense to the people of Ontario, or they would be revealing them. They're not in here. I challenge the members across the way to tell me what they're going to sell and what they're going to cut. I'd like to hear that today from the members opposite and from any minister who dares to tell us what they plan to sell off in Ontario.

We can also understand that in this province there are still so many people who have not benefited from the eight years of revolution. If you look at people who are working at minimum wage—their minimum wage has been frozen for 10 years—they have not benefited from this revolution. In Toronto, we have 65,000 people, mostly seniors, waiting on a list to get affordable housing. Provincial governments going back to Bill Davis used to build affordable housing for seniors in Ontario. The Mike Harris-Ernie Eves government got out of building affordable housing for seniors. Therefore, seniors in Ontario right now are unable to live in good housing after a lifetime of work. They're living in basement apartments and in very high-rent apartments. They don't have any help in this budget in terms of finding housing for people whose pension is very meagre and they just want a one-bedroom or bachelor apartment to live in. There are 65,000 people in the city of Toronto waiting on a list. Do you know how long that list is? At the rate we're going, they estimate it will take 10 years of waiting to house any of those people on the waiting list—65,000 forgotten people who just want a bachelor apartment or a one-bedroom apartment. There's nothing to help those ordinary citizens of Ontario in this budget.

Also, when we look at relief for people, in the city of Toronto for instance, in the Liberal series of commitments, we've said we would help cities like Toronto, Ottawa and Hamilton by having two cents of every litre of gas tax—the provincial government collects 14 cents' tax on every litre of gas that is sold. We're saying we would take two of the 14 cents and give it to municipalities so they can fund basic public transportation. That is a dedicated amount of money that would hopefully be

matched by the federal government so we could have up to \$600 million or \$700 million to help pay for transit.

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In the province today, there is essentially no operating funding for transit. Previous provincial governments, before the Mike Harris government, used to give up to 50% of the day-to-day operating cost of transit. Fifty cents on the dollar used to come from the province; now it's zero for operating. On the capital side—I remember Bill Davis just said two weeks ago that they used to pay 75% of capital. So if they wanted to buy new buses, subways or new OC transit stops in Ottawa, 75% would come from the province. Now all we get are these pre-election promises of transit expenditures, when for the last eight years "transit" was a four-letter word for the Conservative government. They never mentioned public transit. They did nothing but cut it and starve it. But now, on the eve of an election, they start talking about transit. Before, they said, "We don't need to fund transit; we're out of the transit business." They downloaded transit on to the municipalities, on property taxes. That download means you get less public transit and you get more smog and more gridlock. So after eight years of this revolution we have—never mind service cuts, never mind hospital closures, never mind the beating up of teachers, never mind the closing of schools—wall-to-wall gridlock.

I dare anyone to go up to the 401 or the QEW today. Try to get up the 400; it's wall-to-wall gridlock because, in this budget and in previous budgets of the Conservative government, there is no commitment to having a transportation plan for the next five or 10 years. There's no plan; everybody's on their own. They don't have a plan to move people in cars and by transit, because they've never funded anything except on an ad hoc basis. They make an announcement, and it's all done on the spur of the moment, as ministers of transportation have changed every six months.

There's no plan for transportation in the GTA. Imagine, Speaker, you've got six million people in the greater Toronto area and there's no transportation plan, and you wonder why it's to wall-to-wall traffic going at probably five kilometres per hour on the 401 as we speak. About the only highway you can travel on in this province where there are not cars is the 416 going up to Ottawa. That's about the only place where there are no cars. But that's probably the only highway we've opened in the last eight years. In the greater Toronto area, where there are six million people—excuse me, we've got one highway, the 407, which the public paid for, and then the government sold it off in a fire sale in 1999. Premier Eves sold it off for \$3 billion. It's now valued at \$12 billion. That's one highway that was built, but it was sold off.

If you look at the transportation infrastructure, if you look at the social infrastructure, there are all kinds of good organizations in this province that are providing help for seniors. I've got two great organizations in my riding of Eglinton-Lawrence, called POINT, People and Organizations in North Toronto, and SPRINT—they

deliver meals on wheels. But they're constantly asking this government for simple money so that seniors can stay in their homes and get a meal, get driven to doctors' services and provide some housing assistance. These organizations are starved and can't get money. Ninety per cent of their salary costs are nonexistent because they're volunteer organizations. Volunteer organizations that provide good services for the people in our cities and towns are starved for money, yet this Conservative government has a windfall every year of \$4 billion in gaming revenues from all the casinos and all the slot machines—\$4 billion without any work by any government member. They just collect \$4 billion a year. Where does this \$4 billion go? Every year they get this \$4 billion from the casinos and the slot machines, yet we can't give seniors' organizations money to help seniors; we can't fix potholes in our cities; we've got weeds growing along the highways; garbage never gets picked up; our cities can't put in sewers because of all the downloading.

Hospitals—I'll tell you about a hospital just on the edge of my riding: Northwestern Hospital. Mike Harris and Ernie Eves closed the hospital in 1997. They said they were going to build a new hospital up at Humber River, up the street on Weston Road. That was in 1997. They were going to expand the hospital. I'll tell you what happened. Northwestern Hospital is still closed and the Humber River hospital has not been expanded, so where are the people of west Toronto going to get their medical services? One hospital is closed and the other one, the Humber River site, is crammed in the middle of Church Street, a back street, and you can't get at it.

We were promised a new hospital in 1997 by Duncan Sinclair, Mike Harris and Ernie Eves. These are the same whiz kids who told us—the member from Harrisons Corners and the member from Ottawa know too—that it was a good idea to fire the nurses. Remember Mike Harris saying that they were like Hula Hoop workers? You don't need nurses in the new Ontario. The revolution says that we don't need nurses in our revolution, so Mike Harris, Ernie Eves and the Conservatives all clapped. "Fire the nurses, fire more than 10,000," they said. They were happy. Remember them all smiling when Mike Harris compared them to Hula Hoop workers? That was the revolution.

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): Boy, that was clever, wasn't it?

Mr Colle: That was one of the most clever manoeuvres in the revolution of Mike Harris, to fire 10,000 nurses and to now beg for them to come back. Meanwhile they've all left for the States or they've retired and they're fed up.

It's the same with teachers. The cowboy from Mississauga, who is now in Oklahoma, said, "I'm going to fix this education system." He sure fixed it. You ask the people of Ontario if our schools are better. He created a crisis that we still have today—eight years of crisis and conflict in our schools, and this government's budget tells us they're now going to take another \$500 million

out of our public schools and give it to private schools. Talk about crisis; it's a government of crises. They love crises; they love conflict. They're not like the Bill Davis Tories we used to know who had some sense of plan, who treated everybody fairly most of the time. This is a government of cowboys. They change their minds from day to day, from week to week.

They used to say that amalgamation was going to save all kinds of money. Ask the people in the Kawarthas; ask anybody anywhere. These megacities: they love big government and they know that big government means more bureaucracy, less democracy, and that's what we have. The revolution has meant less democracy, more taxes for the ordinary person, more service cuts, and that's what this budget continues to promise. So don't believe it. Remember where this budget was delivered: at Frank Stronach's feet at Magna up in Brampton. How can you believe it if you live in Harrisons Corners? It was delivered up there at Magna in Brampton. Don't believe it; I know you don't.

Mr Guzzo: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would request unanimous consent of the House to move third reading of Bill 45.

Mr Smitherman: Doug Galt said no. The government House leader said no. The member for Northumberland said no.

The Deputy Speaker: The member will either take his seat or stop.

The member for Ottawa West-Nepean has asked for unanimous consent for third reading of Bill 45. Agreed? I heard a no.

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to pass third reading of my bill, Bill 2.

The Deputy Speaker: Agreed? I heard a no.

Comments and questions?

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Ms Martel: I just want to pick up on something the member finished with, which is amalgamation, because our community was one of those that had a forced amalgamation courtesy of this government as well. I can tell you that it has been nothing but a painful experience and a huge debt. None of the seven municipalities before the process had a debt, and when we finished with amalgamation we had \$32 million worth of debt. The province came through with about a third of that as part of their cost to fund the transition. So it's no wonder that the government stopped after Sudbury, because there were no savings to be had. Many of the outlying communities now risk the loss of very important community services: pools, libraries, community centres etc, because the municipality just can't afford to fund it all. It has been a complete disaster.

I know if the member had had more time he would have talked about job losses in northern Ontario. I know this is important to him, and I know he would have, so let me just repeat one more time—because we're dealing with budget measures this afternoon—how much hydro privatization and deregulation has been a job killer in

northern Ontario and how this budget bill the government brings forward today does nothing to respond to that. Here are the numbers again: 300 workers in Falconbridge will be laid off for 13 weeks because of hydro prices; 85 additional people at Falconbridge are losing their jobs permanently; 100 people affected by the layoffs in Cochrane because the sawmill can't afford hydro prices; 340 jobs lost in Dubreuilville; 285 jobs lost in White River; 100 jobs in Kirkland Lake at Tembec; another 400 jobs in Thunder Bay—all related to the high cost of hydro because of this government's hydro privatization and deregulation scheme. It has been a complete disaster. The government should be here today cancelling it.

Ms Mushinski: I actually was going to comment on what the member for Eglinton-Lawrence has said, particularly with respect to hospitals. I keep hearing this mantra, I guess it is, especially from the Liberals, about health care. In terms of health care, as I said earlier, just look at the spending budget on health care. Notwithstanding the fact that when the Canada Health Act was first established there was a relationship between the provinces and the federal government of 50% shared funding—that has now gone down from 50% to about 16% or 17%, give or take half a per cent, and that 17% is the federal share, by the way; the rest is the provincial share—I can recall vividly that when I was a member of Scarborough council and was also on my local hospital board, we begged and pleaded for nine lost years of Liberal government and then NDP government for renal dialysis, because over 400 patients were being shipped either downtown or out to Oshawa. They had to spend almost as long getting to their renal dialysis as they did getting their renal dialysis. We now have renal dialysis in our hospital that services over 800 patients in Scarborough. That's the record of this government.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I'm pleased to pick up on the comments of my honourable colleague from Eglinton-Lawrence. Like him, I know that you don't have to be from Harrison's Corners to recognize it's not good practice to burn storm windows for heat. People at Harrison's Corners also know that most reasonable people shouldn't be making promises they know they can't keep, that they should be going out of their way to tell the truth, not just what they think people want to hear. In that context, I want to make a couple of comments.

Everyone wants a tax cut. I was mayor of the only municipality in Ontario that actually lowered local taxes without gutting services six years in a row, and that was tough.

Interjection.

Mr McMeekin: There may have been one there too. Since your forced amalgamation took place, after you promised it wouldn't happen without the consent of the people, we've had three consecutive years in my beloved Flamborough of double-digit tax increases. I know you are going to blame the municipality for that, and maybe they share part of that blame, but I've got to tell you, this system isn't working very well.

You make tax cuts when you can afford to make tax cuts without gutting services and when doing so helps to reduce the gap between the richest of us and the rest of us, and your tax cuts don't do that.

We've seen a legacy of difficulties that my friend from Eglinton-Lawrence enumerated, but I would add to them. In my area we've seen the visiting homemakers' association go bankrupt. We've seen the seniors' activity management program shut down. We've seen precious rural schools closed on a whim. We've seen downloading that was supposed to be revenue-neutral penalize my new city of Hamilton by \$114 million—just not fair. It doesn't make sense, let alone common sense.

Mr Bisson: I know that if the member, Mr Colle, had longer, he would have talked about northern Ontario. He would have talked about the devastation of jobs that happens in northern Ontario because of this government's privatization and deregulation, and hydro fiasco. He would have talked about communities like Thunder Bay, which has lost 400 jobs because of the electricity policies of this government. He would have talked about White River, which lost almost 300 jobs as of last Friday, where the only employer in town has basically shut their doors for a period of six months, a year or maybe indefinitely according to the discussions we've had with the community and the mill. He would have talked about Dubreuilville, where another 300-plus jobs have been lost because of 75% increases to hydro because they happen to be within Great Lakes Power's jurisdiction, one of the highest rates in Ontario.

He would have talked about Cochrane. His good friend Mr Ramsay represents the community of Cochrane and Cochrane has lost over 100 jobs at Tembec. He would have talked about Kirkland Lake, another community where Tembec has shut down a mill, maybe not indefinitely but certainly it's been on a temporary basis for the last four months, where we've lost over 100 jobs.

He would have talked about Timmins. It's a place he knows and loves because he tells me all the time he wants to come to Timmins. He knows Shania Twain comes from Timmins and understands that, although she's a great attribute to the city of Timmins, Falconbridge is the jobs for the city of Timmins, and we've lost over 300 jobs at Falconbridge over a 13-week period this summer because the company can't afford to pay high energy costs, and a further 85 jobs have been lost overall. And the list goes on.

I would certainly hope that when we come back to this Parliament after the next election, we change the rules of the House to give people like Mr Colle more time to speak so they can raise the kinds of issues my friend and I have raised now.

The hydro policies of the government are job killers in northern Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Eglinton-Lawrence has two minutes to reply.

Mr Colle: I was just about to get to northern Ontario. I think there's a little bit of northern Ontario in all cities

in Ontario because we're all really small towns within big cities.

In all small communities in Ontario this government has let down the average person. If you talk to someone who's driving a Mercedes or someone who's got a 10,000-square-foot home in Brampton, they're happy with this government because they're getting cheques from the government. They're working and they're worried about where they're going to take their vacation. But people in Leamington, Timmins, Harrisons Corners and Carlyle are sick and tired of paying all these bills: the hydro bill, the gas bill, the insurance bill, the property tax bill.

I've always said to my friends on the other side, and to my friend from Scarborough Centre, I never hear the Conservatives using the "a" word any more. Remember they used to use the "a" word all the time? Amalgamation was going to be the lifesaver. I know the

member from Nickel Belt talked about amalgamation and what it did to Sudbury. In Toronto, we're \$1.3 billion in debt thanks to the "a" word they gave us, but they don't talk about the "a" word any more, because they're not going to amalgamate Brampton and Mississauga, and they're not going to amalgamate Newmarket and Richmond Hill, because they know amalgamation is the biggest boondoggle this government ever brought in. It means higher taxes, fewer services, less democracy.

You'll never hear my friend from Brampton use the "a" word. I dare my friend from Scarborough to stand up on her feet the next time she speaks and defend the amalgamation disaster. Was Scarborough better then or now? Answer that question.

The Deputy Speaker: It being almost 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 10 am tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

Fourth Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Quatrième session, 37^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 26 June 2003

Jeudi 26 juin 2003

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Thursday 26 June 2003

Jeudi 26 juin 2003

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

TRAFALGAR MORaine PROTECTION ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LA PROTECTION DE LA MORaine DE TRAFALGAR

Mr Colle moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 27, An Act to protect the Trafalgar Moraine /
Projet de loi 27, Loi visant à protéger la moraine de
Trafalgar.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): The member has up to 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): It's a great privilege to be here in the Ontario Legislature to stand up and support the good citizens of Oakville, some of whom are here today, who care so much about this beautiful part of the greater Toronto area and who care so much about the future of the Oakville area and the legacy that this will mean for their children and their children's children.

I commend Councillor Allan Elgar, who is here today, who has been soldiering on many fronts in Oakville and I think is a councillor in ward 4; Iris McGee and Renee Sandelowsky from Oakville Green; Mike Lansdown, another brave soldier, and so many others who have taken on all comers in standing up for what's right. They basically have said our future health and our future natural environment is more important than the developers making dollars at the expense of the health and well-being of the people of Oakville. So I really commend them for taking on in many cases city hall, taking on the provincial government, taking on the developers, with a great deal of, as I said, abuse at times. But they've been brave and they've been persistent in standing up for what they think is right.

The Trafalgar moraine represents more than just a pure ribbon of very important geography. It represents a symbolic battle that is going on all over southern Ontario between proper planning, sustainable planning, and cheque book planning. Right now in Ontario we in essence have planning that is dictated by who has the biggest bank account. In essence, what has happened too

is that an unelected, appointed group of individuals who are nameless and faceless are also making decisions about the future of the people all across Ontario, as they are in Oakville. Those are the appointed, unelected members of the Ontario Municipal Board.

In other words, the people who have lived and worked in a region and care about its wildlife, care about the air they breathe, no longer have a say in its future. That's what's happening in Oakville. They feel disenfranchised. They say they're taxpayers, they're part of the Lions Club, they care about their community, yet they have no say in the future of their community. That right to be heard has been taken away from them. Now it seems the development industry and unelected people of the Ontario Municipal Board are in charge of mapping the future of their community, and that is not right.

This is, ironically, the third anniversary of when I introduced the Oak Ridges Moraine Protection Act in this very House. I remember that at that time members on the opposite side said, "This is a silly proposal." They said, "You can't do it." They said it wasn't necessary. They said, "There is a local process in place in Richmond Hill. There's the Ontario Municipal Board; there's the region of York. All these things are already in place. You don't need to protect the Oak Ridges moraine." In fact, I remember they even questioned whether there was an Oak Ridges moraine.

We have a repeat scenario here today, where people who are for unbridled sprawl are saying, "You don't need to protect the Trafalgar moraine." Some even say there is no Trafalgar moraine. Some say it's a silly proposal to protect this. It's the same naysayers as were here in this very chamber three years ago saying, "You don't need to protect the Oak Ridges moraine."

Ironically, as you know, there was a hue and cry from Portspool all the way over to King City. People stood up and said, "Yes, there is an Oak Ridges moraine. Yes, we have a right to protect it. Yes, we want to be heard on this. Yes, the provincial government has a role to play in protecting communities against sprawl and planning our communities properly." People got up by the thousands to shame this government into finally admitting there was an Oak Ridges moraine and finally getting them to freeze development of the Oak Ridges moraine for six months until they put in a plan. They did it because the public stood up and were not afraid to stand up.

I'm asking for the same thing here. This bill asks for a temporary hold until all the studies are put in place so that we know exactly where we're going. It's a map to the future. We need all the watershed studies. We need

all the mapping to be completed. We need the provincial government in here because they can at least mitigate the interjurisdictional disputes. Because the Trafalgar moraine and its future not only affects the people in Oakville; the critical thing about the Trafalgar moraine that is very much of provincial interest is that it is right on the border of the Niagara Escarpment, which goes from Tobermory all the way down to Niagara, one of the true treasures that even the United Nations has named as an international biosphere site.

1010

The Trafalgar moraine is a corridor on the edge of the Niagara Escarpment. So whatever we do to the Trafalgar moraine not only affects protection in Oakville; it's going to affect the internationally recognized Niagara Escarpment. If you allow unmitigated sprawl north of Dundas, you're not only, as I said, going to bring about horrendous congestion and smog; you're going to wipe out over 300 wetlands—300 wetlands. I've seen them: Shevchenko Park, north of Dundas, a beautiful little oasis where there are fowl and fish and birds still thriving on the edge of cookie-cutter homes to the south of Dundas.

If the province doesn't step in and say they care about the future of the Trafalgar moraine and the Niagara Escarpment, they're going to basically allow creeping sprawl to go north of Dundas, and as you know, in the town of Milton, there's going to be more sprawl coming from the north. We don't want all of Oakville to look like Mississauga.

There has to be a line drawn in the sand somewhere, because this Westward Ho of sprawl is going to eat up farmland. As you know, right now most of the area north of Dundas, in the Trafalgar moraine area, is farmland—countryside. At what point does the provincial government ever stand up and say that this countryside-farmland area in the western part of the GTA has to have some protective plan? They haven't said that.

There are even more pressures: we have the proposed escarpment expressway, which this government is trying to jam through the escarpment. So you add the escarpment expressway. The 407 already cuts through the Trafalgar moraine, and then you're going to have 55,000 people living in the natural areas north of Dundas.

This is about stopping smog. We know that if you have more people in that area, you're going to have more cars, you're going to have more smog, you're going to have lower quality water. The air quality index in Oakville yesterday was up, I think, to 69, one of the worst air qualities you'll ever get in southern Ontario. How can they absorb another 55,000 people, another 35,000 industry jobs with all their cars in that Trafalgar-Oakville catchment area?

My bill tries to say, "Let's have a time out. Let the province look at a way of protecting this area from the impacts, not only on people, but on the escarpment, on the wetlands, on the wildlife corridors."

We have Bronte Creek Provincial Park, the only provincial park in the GTA, right on the edge of the Trafalgar moraine, a beautiful gem. This government just the other

day sold off 60% of the public lands right on the edge of Bronte Creek Provincial Park.

We need some long-term vision. We need to pause for six months, put in a plan that recognizes the sensitive areas, looks at the transportation issues, looks at the air quality issues and plans for 100 years from now, not for what the developers want to get at the Ontario Municipal Board. That's no way to protect the future of this beautiful, precious area known as the Trafalgar moraine.

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Our wonderful page Tyler Goettl from London-Fanshawe would like to welcome his mom, Lise; his dad, Kyle; his brother Travis; and his sister Hannah to the Legislature. They've come to rescue him at the end of the day.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. That of course is not a point of order. Welcome.

Further debate?

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): Thank you, sir. The children from Fanshawe are missing their last day of school today. I'm sure that's a hardship they can withstand to visit their brother.

We have an interesting bill before us. The Oak Ridges moraine was of course a wonderful piece of Ontario that I voted to protect when Ms Churley brought forward a bill—I think you brought forward a bill on the Oak Ridges moraine perhaps about a year and a half ago. I was pleased to support that, although I remember distinctly as I rose to support that bill, there were a whole bunch of people sitting down over on this side. So my record on supporting environmentally sensitive land in this place is one that I'm proud of.

The member mentioned smog. Well, driving in this morning, it looked like a very early morning on a plain somewhere in western Canada. The mist was beautiful—except that it wasn't mist; it was a pea soup of smog, chemicals and everything else that's probably very bad for us. So protecting land and making sure that we have green space available to us is a very important part of being a government in Ontario. Finding that balance between what is good for the environment and what is good to keep the economics of a province booming as we have in Ontario is the job of government, and it's a very sensitive job.

The Trafalgar moraine is indeed a moraine, as is most of southern Ontario. I was talking about a moraine the other day to a chap here, and he didn't realize what a moraine was. As the glaciers that covered Ontario some 20,000 years ago receded, as the weather began to warm up and the glaciers flowed south, they hit this warm front—just south of Lake Ontario, originally, their southernmost extreme—and they began to melt. As they began to melt, of course they continued to flow, and that built-up soil and land at the end of the glaciers. That buildup of soil is known as a moraine. If that moraine occurred at the southern limit of the glacier, it was known as a terminal moraine. If it occurred on the edge of a glacier, it was known as a lateral moraine. If the glacier just receded in a somewhat consistent fashion, it was known as a moraine.

Now, most of Ontario is a moraine, as is the Trafalgar moraine. It's a defined geological area, and it's very important. I think it's important that we put into perspective what this government has done just last week with regard to the Trafalgar moraine. One small portion of that moraine is owned by the Ontario Realty Corp. That corporation has about 1,100 acres of land north of Dundas highway. Within those 1,100 acres are about 175 acres that are in river valleys and extremely environmentally sensitive lands. As Mr Colle pointed out, there are really some beautiful spots. If you walk up through the Sixteen Mile Creek, it is unbelievably beautiful. You would think you were standing in a location that was there prior to the arrival of Europeans on this continent.

1020

So it's a beautiful piece of land and it deserves to be protected. Originally, about two years ago, we had looked at about 175 acres of land being protected in that area. Through the efforts of myself and Ann Mulvale, the mayor of Oakville, that level of land has been increased so that, as of a week ago, 420 acres were protected, over twice what was originally thought to be protected. Not only have the north-south corridors of the river valleys been protected but, because wildlife doesn't always travel north-south—it has to travel east-west as well—east-west corridors were also protected. So within that 1,100 acres, there is the beginning of a network of trails and environmental land that eventually can go up rivers like Oakville Creek, for instance, or Sixteen Mile Creek and join the Niagara Escarpment, where most of these rivers rise. That would provide an environmentally sensitive area with a trail system that runs basically from Lake Ontario and Oakville—Oakville harbour—all the way up to the Kelso conservation area and Rattlesnake Point and the areas that are known to be around the Niagara Escarpment and tie in with that most sensitive area as well.

Finding that balance—and it's been an interesting project, certainly a very rewarding one—in how much environmental land has to be set aside or can be set aside is important. I'm personally very pleased that the Chair of the Management Board, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Minister of Natural Resources have all come together and supported this 420 acres of environmentally sensitive land that has been set aside on the Trafalgar moraine to begin the process—this is not the end of the story; this is to begin the process—of protecting that land for future generations in Ontario. I'm very pleased that we were able to do that.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I couldn't tell whether the previous speaker is supporting the bill or not, but his comments caused me to even further support Mr Colle's bill.

I might just say that I appreciate the member for Eglinton-Lawrence's work on this bill. Mr Colle was really the first member of the Legislature that I can recall who got very active on the Oak Ridges moraine issue. I can remember many days when I'd talk to Michael and he'd say he was off to a meeting that night in Richmond

Hill or Aurora or Pontypool. It almost seemed like every night of the week he was heading toward a meeting—this was a couple of years ago—dealing with the Oak Ridges moraine. That really started with the community there, which identified the Oak Ridges moraine as a treasure that, if we collectively didn't look at it in its totality and put together a plan to deal with it in total, would disappear piece by piece by piece.

I take my hat off to Mr Colle. As I say, he was, in my memory, the first provincial politician who really got extremely actively involved. So he doesn't come to this issue cold. He has that experience of having dealt with another very similar situation. His bill is an extremely sensible bill which essentially—to quote him, “The purpose of the bill is to temporarily freeze development on and around the Trafalgar moraine until all environmental studies underway are completed and the province puts in place a protective plan that identifies and protects the moraine's environmentally sensitive features.” It's essentially the process followed with the Oak Ridges moraine.

I represent an area in Scarborough and have some experience with another similar issue, and that's the Rouge park. I salute the members of the community who, actually in the early 1980s, identified the Rouge as another of our treasures in the province of Ontario and began to work very hard to preserve that. It started with relatively few people but grew to an enormous movement—that probably is not too strong a word for it.

I don't live in the past, but it happened we were in government in those days, from 1985 to 1990. It was the government of the day that needed to address it. It was the result of community activists, people who understood and cared about the environment, who took a long view of the environment against some very considerable odds. There were enormous interests at stake in the Rouge park. Developers stood to make a considerable amount of money developing the Rouge park. For the provincial government itself, there was a major road that had probably been planned for decades that was going to go right through the centre of the Rouge park. The Ministry of Transportation of the province of Ontario was very determined to protect their future roads. One of the most difficult parts of preserving the Rouge was persuading the Ministry of Transportation to remove that road from the centre of the park.

The purpose of saying all this is that I've learned from experience to listen to the community, to recognize that things that seem relatively challenging can be overcome. In this particular case, it's putting a pause on development until there is a chance for all of us to look at a long-term, comprehensive plan. If the people who mounted the campaign to preserve the Rouge had not been so determined and so committed—all volunteers—we wouldn't have that enormous resource. I walk my dog in the Rouge probably twice a week, year round. It's an absolute treasure that's there only because the community felt it was important and put the time and effort into it. Finally, the politicians of the day were dragged into making the right decision.

My second experience with a major thing such as this was the Oak Ridges moraine. I was relatively uninvolved in it but my colleague Mr Colle was there from the start. Once again, the community there identified the dangers we were all facing. I might add that sometimes these things kind of creep up on you, so that it's happening one piece at a time and we never force ourselves to take the decision to say, "Let's look at this in a comprehensive way."

My colleague Mr Colle also mentioned the Ontario Municipal Board. I have had some experience with the Ontario Municipal Board where a significant local planning issue was sent to the OMB so quickly—because the rules of the OMB are such that a planning issue can move to the OMB before the local community is even aware of it. It was the sale of some Hydro lands in the area I represent. The local community had virtually no opportunity to have a say in the planning for that. It went directly to the OMB. Then they were forced to try and represent their interests to the OMB, with limited resources, against the enormous resources of the developer. My colleague rightly points out the problem communities face in trying to deal with the OMB with their limited resources, often against almost unlimited resources on the other side.

I think the bill is modeled on an approach we took on the Oak Ridges moraine, supported, I might add, by all three parties. I would hope we would find an opportunity today to support Mr Colle's bill and give ourselves a chance to preserve another of the treasures in Ontario.

1030

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): Before I begin my remarks, I want to take this opportunity to introduce Ken and Helen Cressman who are here today from New Hamburg, sitting in the gallery. I'd like to welcome them. I believe this is their first time in the Legislature, and I hope they have a nice day in Toronto.

I am happy to stand and support this bill before us today. It's not the first time I've supported a bill from Mr Colle. In fact, Mr Colle and I worked closely together. We each had a bill on protecting the Oak Ridges moraine. Mr Colle has, I believe, made this almost his life's mission. The work he's done on the Oak Ridges moraine and now on this is to be commended and congratulated.

I also want to take the opportunity of course to thank and congratulate Oakville Green. I believe that's the name of the local group that I met on one occasion. That is the group that's been working very hard, fighting against development of the moraine. I know they're very supportive and perhaps worked with Mr Colle on the bill that's before us today.

This bill is about protecting, in the same vein that we worked and fought so hard for so many months to protect the Oak Ridges moraine. You will recall what we had to go through to get the Oak Ridges moraine protected—numerous local meetings where thousands of people came out to protest the government's plan for development on the Oak Ridges moraine.

I put forward a bill, along with my colleague Shelley Martel, as did Mr Colle. We raised the issue many times in the Legislature. I guess people learned through that whole process—it's kind of sad in a way; good in one way, but sad—that the squeaky wheel does get heard sometimes. It is unfortunate that citizens have to spend so much of their time, freely given—they're not paid to do this—to fight these proposals that will cause great damage to their communities perhaps and to environmentally sensitive land. It shouldn't have to be this way. You would think we would have learned from what happened around the Oak Ridges moraine, that it's not fair and it's in nobody's interest to put people through this kind of process.

We're here again today—it's almost like déjà vu all over again, really. Here we go again. Again, I want to congratulate Mr Colle for his dogged—he's like a dog with a bone who will not let go—approach to protecting these sensitive lands.

I know it's private members' hour, but I want to say categorically that we in the NDP all support this bill before us today, and we do that because support for this cause is consistent with the NDP's green planning principles of stopping sprawl, creating compact growth, which we've talked about a lot in this Legislature, and supporting green space and ecological preservation. That's what this bill embodies here today.

Just let me tell you, though, what I think we have to do. Certainly I would recommend that people take a look at Public Power: Practical Solutions for Ontario, the NDP's platform for the coming election, which is going to be called, we think, soon. You can get it on a Web site, www.publicpower.ca. You can turn to pages 34 and 35, and within these practical solutions, there are two very important—and this does relate to your bill, Mr Colle. I'm not going off subject here. Because one of the concerns—

Mr Chudleigh: Don't worry about it.

Ms Churley: I always try to stay on subject. You know that.

Interjection.

Ms Churley: I had great fun grilling Mr Wilson yesterday over barbecues—ha ha.

Mr Chudleigh: He had fun too.

Ms Churley: Yes, I think he had fun too. However, that in itself is a very serious issue: curtailing smog in this province. That's one of the issues that Mr Colle raised, and I know it's been raised by the member for Halton, Ted Chudleigh, that smog is a very serious problem now.

Yesterday we had a little fun with it, but we were also deadly serious that we have to do everything we can, not only to reduce pollution by phasing out and closing down the coal plants by 2007 and bringing in very strong conservation and efficiency targets, which is what the NDP has been calling for for a long time now and we still don't have, but also to increase and enhance public transportation and not increase urban sprawl in an area where, in fact, the lay of the land is such that you have to

drive to get anywhere. Mr Colle has outlined how much smog will be increased by the development if it takes place as planned.

In our document Public Power: Practical Solutions for Ontario—the web site is www.publicpower.ca, but that's for another day. Seriously, I want to talk about two things. When our government was in power, many people here—I understand the government and the Liberals; we all do this to each other—point out the things that you consider we did wrong when in government and, yes, there are a couple of really good examples. But what you don't do is talk about some of the many things we did right when we were in power.

One of the things we brought in was the green planning act. Many of you were not here at the time. Mr Colle was not here and many of the Liberals who are sitting here today were not here, so I'm not going to blame them. But I will say that both parties, the Tories at the time who were sitting right here as the third party—it must be Gerry Phillips's and Alvin Curling's fault; they were here—voted against our plan for a tough green planning act.

We didn't just willy-nilly bring in a plan without examining it very carefully. We had a team of experts—John Sewell was the chair of that panel and Toby Vigod was then from the Canadian Environmental Law Association, and others—who went across the province. John likes to brag that not only did he come in on time but under budget, which is very rare in this place. Developers, planners, environmental groups and local communities all worked together and, yes, there were some compromises. However, at the end of the day people were generally happy with our comprehensive bill that in fact did what Mr Colle talked about today and what we all talked about when we were trying to protect the Oak Ridges moraine: that is, a green planning act that looked at the province as a whole.

We shouldn't be doing this piecemeal. We need a comprehensive green planning act, once again, that automatically puts in place processes that protect this kind of land, prevents urban sprawl and protects our drinking water at the source. All of those things were embodied within our green planning act.

It was one of the first things the Tory government threw out when they came to power. I found it very regrettable because, not only did they revert back to the previous planning act that was in place before we brought in this new green planning act, but they brought in some other very regressive measures that would actually make it easier for developers to develop on these environmentally sensitive lands.

That is part of our platform. It's the fifth practical solution: "Implement a tough green planning act to fight urban sprawl and preserve valuable agricultural land, wetlands, woodlands and other important natural areas ... from development." We did it before and we must do it again.

The second thing I want to talk about, and this is on page 34 of our Public Power platform, I believe is the

second practical solution. That is bringing in my Ontario Drinking Water Source Protection Act. You will recall that after the tainted water tragedy in Walkerton there was a comprehensive inquiry which we demanded, the people of Walkerton demanded, the Liberals demanded, many of us demanded, and eventually we were able to force the government to appoint Justice O'Connor, who I must say did an incredible job that we're all very happy with.

One of the key recommendations, the linchpin of all of those recommendations, was to bring in the source protection act. Justice O'Connor said that even with the Safe Drinking Water Act—you may recall I had put forward a private member's bill on that which came very close to being passed, but at the end of the day the government did its own. One of the differences between my Safe Drinking Water Act and the government's was that I tried to bring at least some components of source protection into it as we did under the NDP's Oak Ridges moraine act. We also brought in pieces of the green planning act which had been thrown out, and pieces of, even before Justice O'Connor recommended it, on source protection. In many ways, what the bill before us today is about is source protection. When the government says, "You guys did nothing when you were in government on source protection," it's not true. There was not a specific source protection bill at the time, but under the green planning act, there certainly was source protection.

1040

Practical solution 2 talks about bringing in the NDP's source protection act. I'm going to tell you what that would do, because it's relevant to this bill before us today, which is for us to protect a specific environmentally sensitive piece of land. In a nutshell, it "establishes watershed planning boards across the province with the mandate and resources to protect the quantity and quality of water in the watershed. These boards would produce source protection plans that would prevent water contamination by human activity, intensive factory hog farms"—I must say, that's another bill I brought forward some time ago that I've been urging the government to pass; that is, curtailment of these huge factory hog farms, which are also causing environmental havoc in some locations in our province—"massive water taking and other development." The bill is more comprehensive than that, but that, in a nutshell, is what the source protection act would do.

It is absolutely essential, so that we don't have to keep coming back over and over again, as Mr Colle has had to do today and we had to do on the Oak Ridges moraine piece—we're about to do it over another highway the government is talking about bringing in that goes against the grain of their own recommendations of Smart Growth. This is another example of it today. The government received a fair amount of credit for their Smart Growth panel and the recommendations. I gave them some credit for that. I do that from time to time. When I think a government is doing something right, I will stand up and say I think they're doing something right. What is

disturbing to me is that after I give them those compliments, they really severely disappoint me by then turning around and going against their own recommendations. That's what we're seeing here again, the government practising dumb growth, not smart growth.

We have to put together comprehensive legislation that protects environmentally sensitive land across this province so that we don't have to keep coming back and doing this over and over again. We need to protect green space, preserve important ecological features and stop urban sprawl. I must say to the government today that you must not allow the Ontario Realty Corp to sell the land it owns on the moraine to developers. You just can't do that. Once again, it belies everything you said about protecting the Oak Ridges moraine and protecting water sources in this province.

I have to add before I close that if land is deemed to be appropriate to develop on, another good thing the NDP did—there were many we had in place when we were the government—was that government-owned land be set aside to build affordable housing. I know this is an aside. This land, in my view, should not be developed. But certainly there's a great concern now that when there is land owned by the government that is available and appropriate to build housing on, instead of setting aside some of that land to build affordable housing, it's all sold off to developers.

Their friends get to buy it and get to build condos and high-priced houses so they can make money. That's an aside, I know, but one that's very serious, because as we stand here today talking about protecting our environmentally sensitive land, curtailing smog and urban sprawl, we also have a very serious affordable housing crisis in this province because the government stopped building housing, as did the Liberals in Ottawa. They've put some money back on the table and we're waiting for this government to match that money—they haven't done so—so we can start building housing again.

I know I digressed a little bit, but it's another passion of mine. I want to speak in favour of Mr Colle's bill and hope the government will see fit to pass it today, to pass third reading, and let it go through so we can protect this environmentally sensitive land.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm certainly pleased to join in the debate on Bill 27. Essentially, the purpose of the bill is an emergency freeze with respect to the Trafalgar moraine. It says very clearly that it's to take effect May 1, 2003, and the act is repealed on the day the plan made by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to protect the environmentally sensitive areas and other natural features of the Trafalgar moraine from development comes into force. Essentially what the member is asking for is a freeze with respect to anything the municipality can do, and also for a plan from municipal affairs to deal with this land. That's the nature of the bill.

I would say that our government's record with respect to protecting environmentally sensitive areas speaks for itself. We were the first government to protect the Oak

Ridges moraine for future generations. Other parties may have talked a big game when they were in government, but they did nothing to deliver real protection. I think it's appropriate that the Environmental Commissioner recently presented an award to the province for its historic protection of these lands.

More recently, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, Mr Young, protected the Pickering agricultural reserve from the prospect of development by issuing a ministerial zoning order. This bold action ensured that these lands would be protected forever, just as the people of Pickering were promised back in 1999. While the city was looking to possibly reopening that agreement as part of a developmental study, the province made it clear that this land was to be protected in perpetuity. I'll be touching on both of these examples at greater length in a few moments.

It's interesting that the candidate who is running in Pickering, Mayor Arthurs, was not happy with the provincial action taking away the powers of the municipality with respect to dealing with the lands in Pickering and in fact wanted those lands back for development by the municipality, and that's what triggered the province to bring in the zoning order. It's interesting that we have one Liberal bringing forth a bill that will strip municipalities of their powers to deal with the Trafalgar moraine, whereas another Liberal wants to make sure the municipalities have the power to deal with lands that are in the municipality. It would appear that, as usual, the Liberals are going both ways on a particular issue.

Before development can be considered in the study area covered by Oakville's official plan amendment 198, a secondary plan will have to be put in place. As part of the secondary planning process, a sub-watershed study of the area will have to be completed. Let me tell the members of the Legislature about the terms of reference of that sub-watershed study. The terms of reference will ensure that all the environmentally significant features in the area being considered for development will be identified. Those terms of reference include the identification and evaluation of wetlands, woodlands, wildlife travel corridors, habitat areas, areas of natural and scientific interest, environmentally significant areas, watercourses and associated characteristics of the Trafalgar moraine. They call for analysis and determination of water recharge and discharge areas. I repeat, all this will happen before any secondary plan is prepared, and before any consideration is given to individual development proposals. So an emergency freeze, as proposed in Bill 27, is strictly premature.

This government has demonstrated time and again that it is not afraid to act decisively when such action is necessary. When the Oak Ridges moraine was threatened by proposed development, this government stepped in with the Oak Ridges Moraine Protection Act, which created a six-month moratorium on planning applications on the Oak Ridges moraine. The idea was to provide an opportunity for competing interests to get together to reach a consensus on what parts of the moraine needed

protection, how that protection should be accomplished and what areas could be developed with certainty. For more than a decade, people had been arguing about exactly how much protection was needed and how it should be done. Much of the debate about the Oak Ridges moraine had been before the Ontario Municipal Board at tremendous cost in both money and time to municipalities, the province, environmental groups and developers. Three different governments had faced this issue; this government was the first to take action.

In 2001, the government committed to resolve the issue. The situation had come to a head, and the only way to find a solution was to create a six-month moratorium on all planning applications on the moraine. As I said earlier, we are now in an excellent position to protect what needs to be protected in north Oakville through the planning process before we get into the situation we faced on the Oak Ridges moraine.

1050

Let me mention some other examples of the government's commitment to protecting environmentally sensitive areas. In 1999, when the Ontario Realty Corp agreed to sell land it owned in what was then the town of Pickering, it did so on the condition that those lands would remain in agricultural use forever. Pickering, the province and the region of Durham all signed an agreement to that effect. When the city of Pickering decided last year to undertake a growth management study that included these agricultural lands, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing acted decisively. He imposed a zoning order to make sure the agricultural and open space lands in the agricultural reserve would be protected.

Let me give you another example. The province has plans to exchange lands it owns in north Pickering for privately owned lands on the Oak Ridges moraine. Last December, the government made a commitment to retain in public ownership more than half the lands we own there, because these lands have been identified as environmentally sensitive.

These lands were identified and mapped by provincial staff using the principles in the Oak Ridges moraine conservation plan, as recommended by the North Pickering Land Exchange Review Panel. Protecting these lands will ensure a robust natural heritage system in north Pickering.

I mention these examples to demonstrate that this government is more than willing to make tough decisions and act decisively to protect the environment when such action is called for. In the case of north Oakville and the Trafalgar moraine, the legislation we are considering today is unnecessary, because the system is working as it should.

The town of Oakville, the region of Halton and the provincial government are working together to ensure that all environmentally sensitive features in north Oakville, including the Trafalgar moraine, are identified and protected, and that is being done within Ontario's existing land use planning system.

This government is committed to environmental protection. That commitment has been proven by our actions, and not only by our words.

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): I'm very pleased to have the opportunity this morning to speak to the bill that my colleague from Eglinton-Lawrence has put forward with regard to protecting the Trafalgar moraine. I have been very inspired by the good work of my colleague from Eglinton-Lawrence in many ways, and particularly his commitment to the Oak Ridges moraine. This man walked the entire length of the Oak Ridges moraine to make a point with the public that he was absolutely committed to its protection. The member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford indicated that a situation came to a head and so the government acted. The situation that came to a head was the consequence of the good work of my colleague Mr Colle, the member from Eglinton-Lawrence, who worked tirelessly to bring the public's attention to the travesty that was about to happen should development of the Oak Ridges moraine have been allowed to unfold as was happening, so I'm inspired by this man.

Here again we see a piece of legislation before the House. The member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford just suggested it's not necessary. I suggest that Mr Colle, with the experience he had with the Oak Ridges moraine—that is an example that demonstrates why it is absolutely essential that there is legislation to protect the Trafalgar moraine. When it comes to matters of the environment, you cannot trust this government to act in the best interests of the environment.

I know there are many examples even in my own riding where this government has demonstrated an abysmal record in terms of protecting the environment. I point to water-taking permits. There has been an issue—it's ongoing—with the OMYA company out of Perth that was granted a permit to take 1.5 million litres of water per day. That amount will increase to 4.5 million litres of water a day that will be taken out of the Tay River. The people in the community reacted to that. They said, "Wait a minute. We don't think that is in the best interests of our local environment, of the surrounding ecosystem." So they challenged the decision to allow the permit. They took it to the Environmental Review Tribunal. There were 30 days of public hearings where members of the public who are concerned about their local ecosystem made their points to the tribunal. The review tribunal handed down a decision in consideration of all the issues that were placed before it by the community, and certainly the government had an opportunity to make its case at that tribunal hearing as well. The tribunal handed down a decision saying that the company should only be able to take 1.5 million litres of water per day. The tribunal was convinced by the arguments put by the people in the community that it would be only that amount that would not put undue pressure on the local ecosystem.

What did this government do? What did the Minister of the Environment do? On Valentine's Day, when the

House wasn't sitting, when he thought that no one would notice, he overturned the ruling of the Environmental Review Tribunal.

The member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford would like to suggest that the people of Ontario should be confident in the record of this government protecting the environment. The people in my riding do not have confidence that this government has the better interests of the environment at heart.

Another, more recent example: last week the Superior Court of Ontario ruled that the terms of reference for a proposed landfill expansion in my riding were not sound. The terms of reference were approved by the Minister of the Environment. The people in my riding, the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte and concerned residents in the Napanee area, petitioned the minister. They explained all of the reasons why they believed the terms of reference were not adequate to address their concerns around this expansion. They presented to the minister that they were scoped and that it prevented them from considering alternatives which the Environmental Assessment Act would say they have a right to consider. The terms of reference prevented the community from providing those alternatives. This government did not listen to them. Their only option was to appeal to the courts. They did, and last week the courts found in favour of the people and even awarded their costs to them. The courts obviously recognize that the law that's in place now is rather redundant. On one hand, the Environmental Assessment Act says that communities should have the right to consider alternatives, and yet on the other hand the act does give the minister the ability to approve a scoped EA. It is that point exactly that the court ruled on.

Of course, the other issue in my riding is Mellon Lake, where with Ontario's Living Legacy this government has supposedly created acres and acres of parkland. However, there's an insidious little caveat there that talks about forest reserves within the boundaries of these conservation reserves. What can happen in forest reserves? You can mine; you can log; you can produce hydro-electric power. It is another inconsistency I know the Premier is getting all kinds of e-mails, because I'm getting copies in my office, about the inconsistency and the lack of concern for the environment. They produce a document that says one thing but in fact allows something else. Mellon Lake is a classic example of that.

So I commend my colleague Mr Colle. He has identified yet another area that needs protection.

We are not confident in this government. In fact, it is only the record of this government that inspires my colleague to move forward with legislation of his own, because he knows their record. They would suggest that they have been protecting the environment. Their own record would demonstrate that that is not the case. So I am delighted to have this opportunity to support my colleague. I know the people in the communities that include the Trafalgar moraine are encouraged by his commitment to preserving it as a green space in a part of the province that is very beautiful and that in fact needs

that; our environment needs it. So I do intend to support this bill, and I encourage all members on both sides of the aisle to support this in the best interests of the environment of Ontario.

1100

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's a pleasure, in the very few seconds left, to comment with respect to the contradictions made by the mayor of Pickering and their position on a permanent agricultural zone, and on this debate here today.

What really appals me is, first of all, if a person looks at the bill—I'm not sure it's in order. If you look here, there is "No action to be taken" on decisions of the Ontario Municipal Board. Its retroactivity clauses are also, in my opinion, very provocative in terms of nullifying any decisions made by local council. I'm sure this bill has been put together by Mr Colle—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Response?

Mr Colle: Again, I just want to say that I remember three years ago when the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, who is the mouthpiece for the backroom boys in the Premier's office, stood in this House saying the same thing, "You don't need this bill," that it was a silly bill. They had things in place. He talked about their record. The people of Ontario know the record of this government. It's abysmal.

They talk about the Oak Ridges moraine act. They said it was a Communist plot. They ranted and raved about me having the audacity to protect the Oak Ridges moraine. Then they rose up because they were afraid of losing the election and they came up with an act to protect the moraine. But the day after they put in the act, Minister Hodgson passed a secret order to allow 10,000 homes to be built right in the middle of the moraine—the day after they passed the bill.

They talk about the area in Duffins Creek. They don't mention, again, that one half of the area in Pickering is going to be protected; there's another half to the agricultural preserve that's in Markham that is publicly owned and that they are allowing to be developed. They don't mention that. Always half the story.

But I want to talk about this beautiful, precious area called the Trafalgar moraine that needs to be protected if we're going to stop sprawl. This is a litmus test to see if this government really wants to stop sprawl. It's a litmus test to see if this government really wants to do something about smog. It's a litmus test to see if this government is or is not in the pockets of developers.

Well, they ask, will the developers like my bill? They won't. They're afraid to stand up to their developer friends. They are going to say, "We don't need this because the developers have millions to make by paving everything from here to Fort Erie." We need to protect the escarpment. We need to protect air quality in the Oakville-Trafalgar area. We need to protect the birds, the wildlife, the water for our future generations. We don't need to put money into the developers' pockets any more. They have enough money.

The Acting Speaker: This completes the time allocated for debating ballot item number 17. I will place the question to decide—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr O'Toole: What a charlatan.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: No, you won't. You'll withdraw that.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: I will place the questions dealing with ballot item number 17 at 12 o'clock noon.

FAMILY RESTROOM FACILITIES ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LES INSTALLATIONS SANITAIRES FAMILIALES

Mr Parsons moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 73, An Act to facilitate families by requiring that all buildings open to the public be equipped with family restroom facilities / Projet de loi 73, Loi visant à assister les familles en exigeant que tous les bâtiments ouverts au public soient équipés d'installations sanitaires familiales.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): The member has up to 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): Several months ago, a gentleman named Jack Palmer approached me with a wonderful smile on his face to indicate that he was getting married or had just gotten married. I'm very pleased that Jack is with us today and that his wife, Kay, has joined him.

I first met Jack when he approached me about a year ago with an issue. Jack's wife at that time, Rita, was very, very ill. She very much appreciated and enjoyed getting out into the community, but one of the challenges they faced at that time was access to a washroom where Jack could be of assistance to Rita. They really don't exist. So for families that have a need to assist a partner or a child or a friend, a companion or whomever—a very simple issue to most of us is using the washroom, but to some people it's a very difficult challenge and they require assistance.

I should mention before I go on how very pleased I am that Jack and Kay are with us in the back row of the members' gallery. I welcome them to Queen's Park.

Jack said he felt there was a very simple solution to solving the dilemma of people who required some assistance with washrooms. I thought and thought about that. I thought, "What an amazingly simple idea, not terribly complicated, but the provision of a family washroom would profoundly change the quality of life for hundreds, if not thousands, of individuals in our province."

I introduced a bill that would provide that provincial or municipal government buildings that are open to the public on a regular basis or commercial stores with a

floor area in excess of 50,000 square feet would have, along with the men's washroom and the women's washroom, a family washroom.

Once I introduced the bill, I started to be contacted by a number of individuals who shared with me how absolutely delighted they were that this came forward. Some of the stories were very moving. I had some people approach me who are responsible for residents in a group home. These individuals require assistance with virtually every aspect of their lives, but they also get a great deal of enjoyment from being out in the community. It's good for the community and it's good for them. But the people said to me, "When we go out, the major challenge is, if we have female staff with male clients, how do we use the washroom? We can't go in with them. We can assist them at the group home but we can't assist them when we're travelling." The solution they have arrived at in many cases—in too many cases—is to not take the residents of the group home out. So they are in some ways prisoners in the group home, when for so very little money they would be able to travel and be part of our community and enrich their and our lives.

I also have become increasingly aware, and I guess I faced it for myself when I was a parent with extremely young children, travelling with my daughter when she was five or six years old. You go to use public washrooms—she would go in one, I would go in the other. Then when I came out, I would wonder, "When will she be out? Are there any problems? Are there any difficulties in there? Are there people in there that I should be concerned about?" Or indeed, if she had not come out, I'd wonder, "Did she come out before me and someone engaged her in conversation and led her off or whatever?" We've now seen some absolutely tragic and horrible instances, instances that would have been unbelievable years ago, of people literally snatching children off the street. So from a safety viewpoint, this bill would provide the opportunity for a parent to say, "There's a family washroom. I know that if my daughter or son goes in there, there's no one else in there. I can wait outside with absolute security that there is no one else using that washroom."

Following up on Jack's idea, I talked to some businesses in my riding of Prince Edward-Hastings. Dennis McCulloch operates a Canadian Tire store in Belleville. Dennis voluntarily, I believe about 1995 or 1996, put in a family washroom. He knew that it was the right thing to do as a corporate citizen, knew it was the right thing to do as a parent, and knew that it also opened his business up to additional people who could come in and shop in the store knowing they had access to it.

Right across the street from the Canadian Tire in our community is a very large mall, the Quinte Mall. Questions went to them: "What's your reaction to the idea of having a family washroom?" Their reaction to it was to build one. They said, "It's good business, it's good corporate citizenship, it's just a smart thing to do."

1110

I confess that this bill isn't the most glamorous that has ever come before the Legislature. It isn't terribly

exotic and exciting, but it is exciting in the sense of what it can do for the people of Ontario. I applaud the businesses that have chosen to do it voluntarily. The reason for the bill is to require that it's done, and I quite frankly don't expect opposition from businesses. The conversations that I have had, not just within my riding but across Ontario, have been highly supportive of it. But the purpose of the bill—to have it compulsory—is so that someone can travel from one area to another and have complete and total assurance that they will have access to what is a very basic need. We live in a society that has been described as an aging society. We have a large number of people, described as the baby boomers born just after World War II, who are now in the 57 or 58 age group. The fact is that the older we get, the more help we need from our friends. We need to address the reality that we will have an increasing need for people who can support us. What are our most basic needs in some ways? We need food and we need access to a washroom. This bill will ensure that all across Ontario a citizen can set out knowing that they will have access to it. I would even strongly suggest that it will make the province more open to tourists. People from outside the province and from outside the country will be able to travel to Ontario knowing that they have assurance that it's somewhere in the larger ones.

It is certainly not the intent of this bill that individual stores be confronted with it. The smaller stores in a mall or the smaller free-standing stores, quite frankly, have what is probably best described as a unisex washroom now and can meet that need. The need applies only to very large businesses.

My belief is that if there was ever a non-partisan bill before this Legislature, this is it. This is a bill that has the potential to make every member in this room look good. All of us came to make a change. Some of the changes that we can make are very profound, like improving education or improving health care or improving the environment. But there's an expression that says all politics is local. This is a very small, local issue in every one of your offices. I guess it was so obvious that we have in the past collectively not thought about it. This demonstrates the wisdom and the advantages of how politics works in Ontario, where one citizen can come in and say, "Have you thought about this? Would you consider this?" This has been my experience.

As I mentioned earlier, the response from across Ontario has just been overwhelming, from virtually every part of Ontario saying, "This would help my father; this would help my mother; this would help my brother who is developmentally handicapped"—from a sister who said, "He lives with us and it has made us prisoners."

For people who require this assistance, what we're talking about really is much more than just access to a washroom. We're talking independence; we're talking freedom; we're talking a simple little—almost no cost—change to large malls and large stores that would provide freedom for the people of Ontario to travel. In a sense, it's almost an equity issue. For the people who require

assistance, for our citizens who reside in group homes and need assistance, for the safety of our children, I urge every member in this House to support this bill. We need to get it in place as quickly as possible because we have literally thousands of Ontarians waiting to enjoy the freedom, to enjoy the access, to be a full and complete part of our society, to get out, to contribute to us rather than literally being prisoners in a house, which I'm sure every member will agree is unthinkable.

So I urge every member of this House to support this bill. We have a unique opportunity, with almost no cost, to improve the lives of the people of Ontario.

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): The government of Ontario fully supports the principle behind Bill 73. What's more, our government is committed to the families of this province. There are approximately 850,000 children under the age of six in Ontario. The government wants to make sure that they and their parents are accommodated.

In principle, Bill 73 is striving for the same goal that our government is working towards: family-friendly facilities for young families. However, rather than have a separate piece of legislation, any laws or regulations governing buildings in Ontario should be part of the Ontario Building Code Act. I am happy to report that the Eves government has been actively working on revisions and amendments to the Building Code Act that would serve many of the same purposes as Bill 73. As you know, the Building Code Act already has enforcement mechanisms in place. In addition, the building code applies to new or substantially renovated buildings and is not retroactive, that retroactivity being a weakness of Bill 73 that my colleague has pointed out.

Finally, there is nothing in Bill 73 that describes what would constitute an adequate family restroom facility. How many stalls should it have? How many sinks? How wide must the doors be? For instance, Bill 73 states that a family restroom facility means a restroom facility that "is large enough to permit a member of the family or group to accompany another member of the family or group to assist him or her in using the facilities." The difficulty is, how big is that?

These are just some of the questions left unanswered by Bill 73, and these are questions that would be answered if the laudable goals of Bill 73 were achieved through the building code.

I've talked about the benefits and suitability of working through the building code to reach the same goals as those intended by Bill 73. Now let me tell you what we are doing toward that end.

Starting in 2001 and continuing until March 2002, our government consulted intensively and extensively on barrier-free requirements for the Ontario building code. We have a technical advisory committee that includes persons with disabilities, advocates for those with disabilities, building designers, builders and municipal building officials. That committee worked diligently through the public consultation process and then reviewed what it heard to come up with recommendations

it considered a priority for any amendments to the Ontario building code. Included in these recommendations were proposals related to family washrooms.

We held another round of consultations from February 12 to May 12 of this year, a round of consultations that just ended. In this most recent round, we asked Ontarians with disabilities, the general public, building officials, designers and builders for their input on the recommendations set out by the technical advisory committee. Our government is just now reviewing the comments we have received from the latest round of consultations, and they will be incorporated in our code review process.

Our government is on the right track. We are reviewing and considering existing legislation and, where warranted, amendments will be made to the body of legislation we already have, legislation that already has enforcement mechanisms in place, legislation that is well thought out and legislation that has received the benefit of stakeholder input.

Our government's package of barrier-free design requirements includes amendments that encourage the installation of family washrooms in all buildings used by the public. These requirements are being given careful consideration.

All that said, the intent of Bill 73 is both welcome and laudable, and I'm pleased that both the opposition and government members are calling for further positive steps to be taken. Supporting Bill 73 is a good way to show this Legislature's commitment to supporting families and disabled citizens, and I'm proud to join my colleagues in supporting this bill at second reading.

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Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): First of all, I would like to commend and congratulate my colleague from Prince Edward-Hastings for bringing this bill forward. He has worked tirelessly on behalf of persons with disabilities in this province, and on this side of the House we're all very proud of the very good work and advocacy he does.

While I am aware this issue perhaps first came to his attention as a disability issue, I intend to respond this morning as a colleague, but in my role as critic for children, considering children's issues in this province. This bill, I believe, is very important for families with children.

I can perhaps also comment with regard to what the member from Cambridge has presented already. He indicated that perhaps a way to address the concerns raised by my colleague would be to revise the building code, and that the government is in the process of doing that, on some of the questions around the size of washrooms that would be large enough to permit a member of the family or a group to accompany another member of the family or a group in the particular facility. I would say to the member from Cambridge that while I appreciate the point he's making and while I would not argue the Building Code Act might be an area where this issue can be addressed, the fact of the matter is it's not there. They are considering it. This bill is immediate. My col-

league is bringing it forward and it would be an effective law if it were passed right now.

That is why I would hope the members of the government—I believe my colleague will be supported, certainly on this side of the House, in an overwhelming way—will move this issue forward so that the government has the will—it certainly has the ability—to move it for immediate third reading, so that families in this situation who have disabled members can see some action on this, and also families with smaller children.

I want to go to that. Particularly today, in recent weeks, sadly we are aware, now more than ever, that parents of younger children must be ever more vigilant about their safety in public. As a mother with four children myself, I can remember those days when we'd go off on a shopping trip or some kind of expedition with the family, and of course with children one of the inevitable stops we make along the way is a washroom.

I think my colleague from Prince Edward-Hastings has described a situation where dads will take their daughters with them. It comes time to go to the washroom and dads cannot bring the young girl into the men's washroom and they cannot accompany the young girl into the ladies' washroom, so there's a dilemma. What do you do? You stand outside and you wait and hope that everything is OK when she is in there. In today's society there are all kinds of situations that can arise accidentally that could, I believe, put children at risk. The presence of a family washroom in a facility would pre-empt all of those needless concerns, or those concerns would be needless if there was a family washroom. They are certainly very valid now. I think families, now more than ever, are conscious of not letting their children, particularly their small children, out of their sight.

A number of months ago I was on a radio-television program and one of the calls I received was on this very issue: why isn't there a law in the province of Ontario to assist individuals who need to be assisted in this way? They thought it was something that was very important. They were also able to name businesses in the community that provided this service. My colleague talked about some businesses in the community that have very wisely incorporated family washrooms into their building plans. Sadly, though, they are more unusual than usual.

The purpose of my colleague's bill this morning is to change that so that people either with the need to have someone assist them or whose family member needs to be assisted or if they're in a work situation where they would need to accompany a person of the opposite sex to assist them in this area—they are very restricted. This bill will alleviate that.

My colleague talks about people feeling like they're prisoners in their own community, that they would like to get out, but when they get out they encounter these particular challenges. We have an Ontarians with Disabilities Act which is supposed to level the playing field for persons with disabilities. It's supposed to be enabling legislation and yet there continue to be many situations and circumstances in our communities when that is not the case.

My colleague has identified one of those and has brought forward a private member's bill to try to address that in a very meaningful way. I think it's fortuitous that, while it will have an impact particularly for persons with disabilities who have a need, it's also going to benefit families. It will enable them to travel and feel more safe and confident when their younger family members have a need, because they're now going to be able to address that in a more safe way.

I was encouraged when I heard the comments of the member from Cambridge. While he did identify that there might be another act that could achieve this assistance, I believe that this bill today will do that more quickly. The questions raised by the member from Cambridge could be addressed with regulations around size and how they can be located or situated, but I sincerely hope that all members of the Legislature will support this bill so that Ontarians, disabled and able and families, will be able to safely access these very necessary facilities in public.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I appreciate the opportunity to stand in the House this morning in private members' public business to lend support to this piece of public business brought forward by the member for Prince Edward-Hastings, Mr Parsons. I think it's an important piece of public policy that we deal with here this morning. It may not present as very gripping or large in terms of some of the issues that we are confronted with here every day, but I suggest to you that it is an important issue when those occasions arise when all of us are confronted with the need to get to a bathroom with a young child or somebody who's in need of assistance and all you have are the more public offerings that you run into.

The fact that Mr Parsons has brought this forward speaks to probably some of his own experience with family and the people in his care whom he has needed to look after in his travels across the province. I was fortunate to travel with him earlier this week up into northern Ontario, where he and I got a first-hand look at the vast amount of territory and the roads that we find in this province. Never mind family washrooms, they don't even have washrooms. You find the nearest tree and you pull over, and in those instances—

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): That's not environmentally friendly, Tony.

Mr Martin: It is, actually. You contribute a little water and nutrient.

Mr Caplan: Nutrients.

Mr Martin: Yes, nutrient. No big deal there.

Interjection.

Mr Martin: Yes, getting a little slippery.

In northern Ontario, to put this in context, we're in need of some bathrooms, clean and accessible, in many of the places that you, Speaker, and I know about as we travel, as you travel in particular to cover the vast territory that you represent in northern Ontario, and understand that when you travel with family you're not out of your house more than five or 10 minutes when some voice from the back says, "Dad, I need to go to the bath-

room," and then you're into wondering where you might stop and where you might go. We all know that if you stop at a restaurant or a place of business, in most instances you have to buy something before you can actually use the washroom. Of course, the first place you stop is oftentimes a coffee shop, and if you have a coffee, then you have to stop another hour down the road, particularly those of us who are getting a little older and are starting to have some difficulties with our plumbing. When we do need to use the facilities it's often in a big hurry and when it's family, of course, it's always in a big hurry.

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I think this bill is a timely one and will respond to some of the very real challenges that families in particular face out there as they go shopping or travelling with youngsters and want to assist them in looking after their very personal needs, not to speak of some of the safety issues we all have to deal with these days as well. I have four children, two boys and two girls, and from time to time out in a public space, when one of them needs to go to the bathroom, you think twice before letting them go off on their own to a washroom. You hear stories. How many of them actually happen in any particular place is another question, but you hear of stories that are very real, in many instances, and you have some concern and would like to attend with your child. I've spent many a five or 10 minutes standing outside of the washroom door waiting for my young daughter to come out, hoping that she'll be OK. This bill certainly would go a ways to being much more helpful on that front.

My only concern is that this may end up being another cost on municipalities. It would be a problem if that became an issue. We know that over the years this government has already downloaded almost everything the provincial government used to be responsible for in terms of cost. To put another challenge in front of them I think would be difficult.

This bill reminds me a little bit of the exercise that both Mr Parsons and I went through in critiquing the Ontarians with Disabilities Act that came forward last year and that certainly went a small distance to indicate that there's a concern and a real need out there to do something. But again this government wasn't willing to come forward with the kind of money that was necessary to make sure that some of what was required under an Ontarians with Disabilities Act would get implemented.

I would hope that in passing this bill, and I hope it will pass—certainly our caucus will support it—the government will also recognize the need to make sure that there's money made available to municipalities, if that's where this ends up being taken care of, that there's money made available to those organizations to make sure that they can in fact provide these washrooms.

We're in need of these kinds of facilities across the province for all kinds of people. Certainly the bill as it's presented speaks of the need of children and people with disabilities travelling with attendants. I would guess that probably our elderly are another group of people who

need to be considered when we look at the issue of providing comfort stations across the province, knowing where those comfort stations are and making sure that they're accessible and free for people to use. I remember back in the 1960s, as a young person coming down to Toronto to visit from northern Ontario, running into the phenomenon of pay toilets and having to spend a dime to get into a toilet. If you didn't have a dime, well, you were out of luck. Many of us, though, became very creative in that we would wait until somebody came out and grab the door and get in and do our business. I don't know if we'd be charged with that or not—

Mr Parsons: You're speaking for your party.
Mr Martin: I'm speaking for me. I don't know whether it was a criminal activity involved in at that particular point in time: robbing the—

Interjection.
Mr Martin: Yes. Well, you might want to do an FOI on it. I don't know; how do you get to the bottom of something like that?

Here I am in Toronto, confronted with a toilet that you have to pay for to use. I used to take the bus down, the old bus station down on the corner of Bay and Dundas—I guess it was there someplace. Here you are, you've spent the night on the bus and you get off. You've drunk a lot of coffee and the first thing you want to do is use a washroom, and you either don't have a dime or you don't have the change. You're confronted with quite a dilemma. I have to say that on more than one occasion I actually waited until somebody came out and grabbed the door and got in and did my business.

You don't understand the currency in an issue like this, as I said earlier, until you're confronted with it yourself in the first place. So I hope that whatever we do here to make it easier for families to access comfort stations and provide relief for their children in a supportive and safe way, we'll make sure the resources are available so we don't end up going back to a time—although it wouldn't surprise me with this government; they've found ways to add a fee to almost everything or to privatize almost anything that moves in this province over the last eight years. It wouldn't surprise me that we would find ourselves returning to the issue of pay toilets.

I would guess that the government's response to this would be: "This is a really good idea. We'll see if there's a private sector operator out there who wants to run these things, and then we'll find a way to make people pay."

Mr Parsons: Don't give them ideas, Tony.
Mr Martin: I'm not saying this is where we should be going. All I'm saying is that I can imagine a return to the days of having to put—well, it wouldn't be a dime any more, would it; it would probably be a loonie or a toonie that you'd be putting in. We're now paying for parking anyplace you go. There's another thing they might do: first you pay for the parking around the facility and then, when you actually get to use the facility, because it's a private sector operation under the ideology of the government of the day, we would probably have to dig into our pocket for a loonie or a toonie to actually get into the facility.

The Speaker would know that up in northern Ontario now, if you pull in to use a restroom—and there are a few—

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): Every 500 miles.

Mr Martin: There are a few, every 500 miles. But now there is actually a little box that you have to put a coin into, first of all to park, if you want to use the restroom or if you want to go for a little swim on a hot day like we've had in the last couple of weeks. You're out in the middle of nowhere, nothing but you and the blackflies. There's nobody parked for miles around, but there's a little box there that you've got to put money in, because this government feels that it doesn't matter where you are, they want to fleece you.

Mr Parsons: That's when you have the coin with the string on it.

Mr Martin: We could do that, too. I never did that before—the coin with the string on it.

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): Do you call that downloading?

Mr Martin: The debate is really starting to slide now. Anyway, up in northern Ontario you're starting to have to pay for facilities and the great outdoors that you used to take for granted when you lived up there before—it was just there, it was yours and you would use it. Don't be surprised, if they accept your bill here this morning, that that in fact is where they go.

Just by way of a little commercial for a local entrepreneur in my area, there's a fellow by the name of Jimmy Fitzpatrick, who builds very comfortable stations that he sells to the Ministry of Natural Resources or the Ministry of Transportation. They're very clean and affordable, and the ventilation is excellent. If anybody is interested in making sure there are facilities for families, particularly in some of the more remote areas of our province, they might want to give Fitzpatrick Industries in Sault Ste Marie a call—it's on the Web—and check that out.

I think we do need to be looking at making sure we are providing these kinds of facilities, these kinds of comfort stations, these kinds of opportunities for the travelling public in the province. Just recently in the Soo I was at a meeting of the seniors health advisory committee, and one of the issues identified by them was this issue of comfort stations or rest stations, because seniors like to travel, like to go places. If they're like me—as I'm getting further into my 50s, I find that I'm in need more often of a place to stop to take advantage of a comfort station. But they identified that there weren't very many of them; or if they were available, they weren't readily identifiable; or they may in fact be opportunities you have to spend some money to access. As I said before, if you have to buy a coffee in order to use the comfort room, usually an hour later you have to get rid of the coffee and do it again.

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So they took upon themselves a project to identify every rest station available in Ontario and put it in a little brochure, and they shared it with the membership of the

various senior groups across the city of Sault Ste Marie. I thought it was a great service and a great idea. It speaks to the issue in a way that reflects how, in some instances, it's sort of an innocuous sort of piece of public business—or should I say private business—that we all need to deal with from time to time, but it becomes rather critical when it's your time or the time of your family to actually participate in it.

So we in this caucus will have no difficulty supporting the bill brought forward this morning during private members' public business by the member for Prince Edward-Hastings, Mr Parsons. We think it's a good move forward in this time of real concern about the safety of children, and about how we support each other as we travel across the province and provide opportunities for people with disabilities and people oftentimes with seniors, so there's a level of comfort around that kind of business as we do that. We need to support any effort to further that agenda.

My only concern, and the concern of our caucus, as I said, is the question of who pays for it and that it not become another exercise in downloading, that something we think is a great idea and should be provided out there for the travelling public, families, the disabled and seniors across the province not be downloaded on the backs of municipalities or other not-for-profit groups or, in fact, be turned over to the private sector and we go back 20 or 30 years and begin to have to pay for these kinds of facilities again.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm certainly pleased to join the debate with respect to Bill 73, which essentially would require that "family restroom facilities be available, as of January 1, 2005, in significant public buildings, including privately owned buildings such as shopping centres, arenas and stadiums that have significant public access."

"Building" is defined as including "an arena, stadium, shopping centre, casino or other structure to which the public has access."

What's important is what this is meant to cover. It would appear that it's meant to cover privately owned buildings over 50,000 square feet and municipal and provincial buildings that are open to the public. What is meant by "family restroom" is one that allows for babies to be changed, is accessible to people with disabilities and would allow an adult of either gender to help a child or disabled adult of either gender to use the facilities.

Certainly the government supports the principle of this bill. In 2001 we passed the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, and that act states that, "In consultation with persons with disabilities and others, the government of Ontario shall develop barrier-free design guidelines to promote accessibility for persons with disabilities to buildings, structures and premises, or parts of buildings, structures and premises, that the government purchases, enters into a lease for, constructs or significantly renovates." That act also requires that every municipal council shall each year establish an accessibility plan that will "address the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to

persons with disabilities in the municipality's bylaws and in its policies, programs, practices and services."

As well, the Ontarians with Disabilities Act requires each municipality to report on:

"(a) the measures the municipality has taken to identify, remove and prevent barriers to persons with disabilities;

"(b) the measures in place to ensure that the municipality assesses its proposals for by-laws, policies, programs, practices and services to determine their effect on accessibility for persons with disabilities;

"(c) a list of the bylaws, policies, programs, practices and services that the municipality will review in the coming year in order to identify barriers to persons with disabilities;

"(d) the measures that the municipality intends to take in the coming year to identify, remove and prevent barriers to persons with disabilities."

The Ontarians with Disabilities Act also applies to educational institutions and hospitals, and requires every educational institution and hospital to:

"(a) prepare an accessibility plan; and

"(b) consult with persons with disabilities and others in preparing the plan."

Those accessibility plans must include:

"(a) a report on the measures the organization has taken to identify, remove and prevent barriers to persons with disabilities;

"(b) the measures in place to ensure that the organization assesses its proposals for bylaws, policies, programs, practices and services to determine their effect on accessibility for persons with disabilities;

"(c) a list of the bylaws, policies, programs, practices and services that the organization will review in the coming year in order to identify barriers to persons with disabilities;

"(d) the measures that the organization intends to take in the coming year to identify, remove and prevent barriers to persons with disabilities."

The government of Ontario is committed to working with every sector of society to move toward a province in which no new barriers are created and existing ones are removed. This responsibility rests with every social and economic sector, every region, every government, every organization, institution and association, and every person in this province.

The right of persons with disabilities to equal treatment without discrimination in accordance with the Human Rights Code is addressed in a number of Ontario statutes and regulations. We have the Assessment Act, which provides for exemptions from property taxation where improvements, alterations or additions to existing homes or designated portions of new homes are made or built to accommodate persons with disabilities who would otherwise require care in an institution. We have the Blind Persons' Rights Act, which prohibits discrimination in services, accommodations, facilities or occupancy against blind persons using guide dogs and prohibits persons who are not blind from using white canes. We have the Building Code Act, 1992, and the regula-

tions made under it that establish standards for the construction, renovation and change of use of buildings and structures, including standards related to the accessibility of buildings and structures for persons with disabilities.

I've taken the time to list the work this government has done to advance the cause of all Ontarians with disabilities because I want to emphasize the strong support this government gives to the principle behind Bill 73. As you will recall, in October 1998, this government gave its full endorsement to 11 principles in support of Ontarians with disabilities. There are, however, some concerns about Bill 73 that will need further discussion.

Before I get to that, I want to be clear that what the member is dealing with here is not just persons with disabilities; he's also dealing with families, with respect to their children. Certainly, the family restroom is something that, myself being a father of four children aged five to 12—when you're travelling or you're going through areas of the community and you have to deal with situations with children, it's nice to know that there's a consideration with respect to the needs of families. I think that's what the member is trying to put forth here, a recognition that, as it says, allows for babies to be changed. Having those facilities available I don't think is a lot to ask for, in terms of dealing with your children in public facilities.

There are some concerns about Bill 73 that, as I said, need further discussion. For example, the bill is retroactive. Many businesses may have to undertake expensive renovations that they'll have to put into their cost figuring and their budgets that they may not have yet done; it includes no enforcement mechanisms in terms of making sure that the organizations that are covered by this bill in fact do what is requested. It does not describe what constitutes an adequate family restroom facility in terms of standards, which may have to be addressed in regulations. It doesn't say whether an owner or a tenant is responsible to undertake the modifications in dealing with this situation. Those are issues we can discuss in the future. As I said, the principle behind this bill is commendable and I'm pleased to support it in terms of supporting families and also persons with disabilities.

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Mr Gerretsen: First of all, let me congratulate the member from Prince Edward-Hastings for being an ardent advocate for the disabled in the last four years that he's been here. The number of issues he has raised, the number of times he has requested that the government increase the ODSP payments, the number of times he has just talked about issues relating to the disabled and wanting to better their lives so that they can lead as normal a life is possible has been just tremendous over the last number of years. I think he should be congratulated for that.

Certainly this bill is another example of where he has taken an issue that maybe doesn't mean very much to most people out there and said, "Look, there are individuals who have real difficulties when they're travelling dealing with family situations where somebody has to

use a restroom, whether they're a child, whether they're disabled or whether they're elderly."

I understand that Mr Jack Palmer, in his riding of Prince Edward-Hastings, actually brought this idea forward because he had circumstances that caused him some difficulty in not having these kinds of restrooms available. He brought this idea forward and he's put it in a bill that to some people may be laughable or may not be all that important.

But let me just remind you that there have been many changes that have been brought about in our society over the last 100 years, I suppose, that have started with an idea. It wasn't that long ago when there were literally no public washrooms available at all in many of our towns and villages and in many of the early shopping centres that were built. Somebody then said, "Hey, we have to do something about it." Eventually, it almost became a norm that as municipalities developed, as they redeveloped, as shopping centres were built, as arenas were built, these kind of facilities were put forward.

The other one that comes to mind immediately is our whole attitude toward smoking. I can remember years ago being approached by the non-smokers societies of Ontario suggesting that perhaps there shouldn't be any smoking in public places. That wasn't necessarily accepted at that time. Maybe it was because a greater number of people smoked. But again, it was the idea that was brought forward and over a period of time of 10 to 15 to 20 years, it gained general acceptance in our society, whereas by now it's the norm that smoking should only be done in areas where it's not going to interfere with the rights of other individuals. This bill, this law is much the same.

I should also give tribute to my other colleague from eastern Ontario. It does look from this bill as if it's eastern Ontario day as far as our caucus is concerned, having heard from both the member for Prince Edward-Hastings and of course the eloquent debate that was made by Ms Dombrowsky, the member for Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, that great riding that covers almost the entire part of eastern Ontario that lies between Kingston and Belleville, all the way up to Algonquin Park.

The other nice thing about this—and I know the members of the government have some concern about this—but I think from what I've heard so far, it is wonderful to see that we can actually work together on an idea collectively. That's what private members' hours should be all about. Here, an individual member has brought an idea forward that has been given to him by one of his constituents, and there seems to be general acceptance of this in the House. What we obviously hope will happen in a situation like this is that the bill will be given second reading, it will then be referred to a committee so that all the kind of difficulties that some of the government members talked about can be ironed out. It's only at the committee stage where the committee can hear from some of the experts, hear from the general public, have some input from a variety of people and from a variety of sources, because undoubtedly we want

to hear from the shopping centre owners, from the arena owners, from some of the municipalities how perhaps this bill can be strengthened, how it can be implemented, what changes should be made to it. That is the whole idea of bringing this kind of bill forward, so that in effect it can be given approval in principle on second reading, then be referred to committee and come back.

I'm somewhat concerned when the government members talk about the fact that this can be dealt with through the building code, when I hear them say things like, "The building code encourages a certain kind of development." The word "encourage" I suppose is better than not doing anything, but I can tell you that the word "encourage" doesn't really lead to action necessarily, and in most cases it doesn't lead to action. There really has to be the will there of the individual owners and operators of these facilities to actually make it happen. Sometimes when we don't see that will there, then in effect it has to be imposed through government action. That's really what this is all about.

Just talking about the restroom issue in general, it wasn't that long ago when the notion of having a change table for babies in restrooms was almost unknown. I don't know how long they've been around. It may even have been some of the commercial establishments, quite frankly, like the McDonald's or the Burger Kings, that started that. I'm not quite sure. But it wasn't that long ago when that wasn't the norm. Now you see that in most public facilities and in most restrooms that are associated with public facilities.

This is just one step forward, that we do this not only for individuals with small children but also for individuals who are elderly. We all know we live in a society where our median age is getting higher and higher. People live longer, but they also need then the kind of situations presented to them whereby they can still be involved in the normal activity and the normal way of life by having the kinds of facilities that are talked about in this bill.

I just want to once again say to the member that he should be congratulated on bringing this idea forward. I hope that this House will give it unanimous approval, that it will send it to a committee. Over the summer, perhaps, we could have public hearings on this issue, not only here in Toronto but elsewhere as well, so that when we come back here in September one of the first courses of action that we could take at that point in time would be to have this bill brought back here and given third reading and implemented as soon as possible.

Hon Frank Klees (Minister of Transportation): I'm pleased to provide a couple of comments on this bill. I suppose that I'll speak in my capacity as Minister of Transportation as well as from my former position as Minister of Tourism.

Anything that can be done in this province to make life better for travellers, for people who are either visiting from outside of the province or visiting within the province, is appropriate. So I certainly look forward to some more detail on this. As my colleagues have expressed, there are some implementation concerns,

whether in fact it's the right level of government to deal with this. That's yet to be determined. But certainly there's nothing wrong with considering the ideas that have been brought forward, nothing wrong with further discussion relating to them.

At the end of the day, Ontario is a great place to live, to work, to raise a family, and it's a great place to visit. Anything we can do throughout our communities to make Ontario more attractive is supported by me.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Parsons: I'd like to thank the Minister of Transportation, the members from Cambridge, Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, Sault Ste Marie, Kingston and the Islands, and Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford for their discussion on this item.

I especially want to thank Jack Palmer, who cared so much for his late wife, Rita, that he came forward and said, "I'm going to try to make a difference and I'm going to try to make a change for everyone."

I can appreciate the comments that the building code encourages the provision of washrooms, but, folks, the building code doesn't encourage the provision of washrooms for people with special needs; it requires and mandates that there be washrooms for people who do not have special needs. Surely in the name of equity, then, it should not encourage but require washrooms for those who have special needs. It's insane to have it otherwise.

We have the opportunity to do what may be a very small step to profoundly change the lives of thousands of people in Ontario. Everyone here can think of someone who would benefit from that. Everyone has a friend, a neighbour, a relative, a son or a daughter whose lives would be changed by doing this. Seniors and people with disabilities are not second-rate citizens. This gives them the equity to enjoy and be fully part of our Ontario.

For children, this bill has the potential to literally save a child's life. We have seen some things that cause us to say, "What is the world coming to, that someone would do that?" We have a wonderful province with wonderful people. But this bill could literally save a child's life. I urge you to support it, and I urge you to move it through the system so that we can say collectively we made a difference in someone's life today.

The Acting Speaker: This completes the time allocated for debate on ballot item 18. We will now deal with ballot item 17.

TRAFALGAR MORAINÉ PROTECTION ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LA PROTECTION DE LA MORAINÉ DE TRAFALGAR

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Mr Colle has moved second reading of Bill 27.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will have the division after I deal with ballot item number 18.

FAMILY RESTROOM
FACILITIES ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003
SUR LES INSTALLATIONS
SANITAIRES FAMILIALES

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Mr Parsons has moved second reading of Bill 73.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

The motion is carried.

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): I ask that this bill be referred to the standing committee on general government.

The Acting Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

TRAFALGAR MORaine
PROTECTION ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LA PROTECTION
DE LA MORaine DE TRAFALGAR

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): We'll now take the division on ballot item 17. Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1203 to 1208.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour will please stand and remain standing until your name is called.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic
Bartolucci, Rick
Bountrogianni, Marie
Boyer, Claudette
Bryant, Michael
Caplan, David
Churley, Marilyn
Colle, Mike
Cordiano, Joseph
Crozier, Bruce
Curling, Alvin

Di Cocco, Caroline
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duncan, Dwight
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hoy, Pat
Kennedy, Gerard
Kormos, Peter
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Levac, David

Martin, Tony
McMeekin, Ted
Parsons, Ernie
Patten, Richard
Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Prue, Michael
Pupatello, Sandra
Ramsay, David
Ruprecht, Tony
Smitherman, George

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please stand and remain standing.

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Baird, John R.
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Brad
Coburn, Brian
Cunningham, Dianne
DeFaria, Carl
Elliott, Brenda
Flaherty, Jim
Galt, Doug
Gilchrist, Steve
Gill, Raminder
Guzzo, Garry J.

Hardeman, Ernie
Hastings, John
Hudak, Tim
Johns, Helen
Johnson, Bert
Kells, Morley
Klees, Frank
Martiniuk, Gerry
Maves, Bart
Mazzilli, Frank
McDonald, AL
Miller, Norm
Molinari, Tina R.
Munro, Julia

Mushinski, Marilyn
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Runciman, Robert W.
Sampson, Rob
Spina, Joseph
Sterling, Norman W.
Tascona, Joseph N.
Tsubouchi, David H.
Turnbull, David
Wilson, Jim
Wood, Bob
Young, David

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 33; the nays are 41.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

It being after 12 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1212 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): The Minister of the Environment turns a blind eye to the importation and landfilling of untreated hazardous waste in this province. He takes no responsibility to toughen the rules to raise the standards with other jurisdictions. These lax rules are making Ontario the dumping ground for other people's toxic waste, yet this minister thinks that this is acceptable for our environment.

The coal-fired plants continue to burn about 2,000 pounds per person in this province, and the Conservative government has not provided any material to educate the public on how to conserve energy. We know that the use of cars continues to rise. But have no fear because the Minister of the Environment, the Honourable Jim Wilson, had a brainstorm to solve our air quality problems. He is asking the people of Ontario to stop using their barbecues. This ridiculous advice shows the level of incompetence and lack of knowledge of the minister and this government.

It's the lack of leadership in this current government and tremendous ignorance of the causes of our smog that should be a concern to the people of Ontario: the government that says it's acceptable to landfill untreated hazardous waste and it won't hurt the environment, but that a barbecue does.

OSPCA AWARDS

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): Last Saturday I had the honour of attending the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals awards luncheon, along with my colleague, the Honourable David Tsubouchi, Chair of Management Board and Minister of Culture.

Although all of the staff and volunteers should be praised for their efforts, I only have time to mention a few here today. The Queen's Golden Jubilee awards went to Frankie Gowland and Terry Looker. The Inspector of the Year went to Mindy Hall. The Agent of the Year went to Angie Babiak.

One Animal Award for Courage went to Tootsie, who is an elderly quarter horse. Tootsie has been rescued not once but twice in her lifetime by the OSPCA and is now living out her old age in a loving home. The second Animal Award for Courage went to Carlos. Carlos had been subjected to such severe abuse that one of his hind legs had to be amputated. Carlos is now a happy dog in a

loving home. I had the honour of presenting the animal awards to Carlos, his owners, and Tootsie's new owners.

The Appreciation Award recipients were the Honourable David Tsubouchi, the Honourable Robert Runciman, Dr James Young, Dr Mona Campbell, Lloyd and Lindsay Robson, Dr Brian Westgarth-Taylor, Centennial Animal Hospital, Warden Animal Clinic, and retired Brigadier-General Chris Snider and I.

The Animal of the Year award went to Marilyn. Marilyn is a Doberman who had been abandoned after weaning a litter of puppies. The same volunteer who was helping Marilyn also had an orphaned litter of kittens. It was not long before Marilyn became their new mom.

Volunteer Agent of the Year went to Terry Graham. The Frankie Gowland Volunteer of the Year award went to Rose Hogg and Anne Forward. Staff Member of the Year went to Connie Mallory.

I am sorry not to have the time to mention all the winners. Congratulations.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): Two hundred days: 200 days of inaction from that government.

Interjection.

Mr Smitherman: The member for Kitchener Centre says, "Cool down," because he doesn't care about dealing with auto insurance. Two hundred days of inaction from that government since they passed Bill 198, 200 days since the promise of some relief for Ontario's motorists, and nothing from that government. They've focus-grouped it. They've gone out and talked to little groups, they've had roundtables, and they've conducted everything except anything that will lead to action and will lead to any relief for Ontario's driving motorists.

The Ontario Liberal Party is working hard to offer solutions on this matter, and over the course of this summer, while they play run-and-hide, while they duck their responsibilities, we'll be moving around from town to hamlet to city in this province and we'll be talking to people about the solutions for automobile insurance in this province.

I say to the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Finance has a shameful record on the issue of automobile insurance in this province. While Ontario's motorists are facing an average increase of 19.2%, she has taken 200 days—200 days—and still no action on the issue of rate increases in the province.

We're counting the days. They are numbered for that government, and they are numbered because they are unable to act in the face of the crisis facing Ontario's driving public. But Dalton McGuinty and Ontario Liberals will.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm sure the member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale, I think it is, is certainly under some stress—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): It's not a point of order. I thank him anyway.

WILDLIFE PROTECTION

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I rise today to relay to the House my privilege of launching the Polar Bear Protection Act.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): We'll allow the member to start again. It wasn't fair. There were some carryings-on. If you could reset the clock, and the member for Scarborough Centre.

Ms Mushinski: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I rise today to relay to the House my privilege of launching the Polar Bear Protection Act. As members will know, I introduced the bill on Tuesday in the Legislature, and earlier that day I announced my intention to introduce the bill at the Toronto zoo. I was joined there by Kimberley Davies, who is the director of sales and marketing at the Best Western Executive Inn in my riding of Scarborough Centre. Kimberley has also agreed to take the lead on a special committee I set up to assist Scarborough in its economic recovery from the SARS crisis. Also present were Dr William Rapley and Dr David Barney, who are both from the Metropolitan Toronto Zoo. They take care of Inukshuk, our little orphaned polar bear, who in part is the inspiration for my bill to protect Ontario's polar bears.

I was happy to see children present, who can learn that one part of our ecosystem is integrated with the others. I was happy to see the children learning to respect nature and all of our natural resources.

In closing, the Polar Bear Protection Act will prevent the abuse of this precious Ontario natural resource. I urge all members to support the bill when it comes up for second reading, and I encourage everyone to visit the Toronto zoo to witness first-hand the magnificence of little Inukshuk and the other wonderful animals.

I should also add that the pages in this place have collected out of their own pockets money to give to the protection of our polar bears, and they are to be congratulated.

1340

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): It is with great sadness that I stand in the House today to inform the Legislature that as a result of continued underfunding by the provincial government, the Lakehead Regional Family Centre, which provides vital mental health services to children in the Thunder Bay area, has been forced to announce major staffing and service cuts, an announcement that is in fact taking place at this very moment in my community.

It is difficult to contain my anger, as the reality of this forced cut would not have been necessary if the government and specifically the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services were simply prepared to provide the necessary funding to enable children in desperate need to receive these services.

Last year the LRFC announced its first ever deficit, a deficit caused specifically by a constantly increasing caseload and the province's absolute denial of a funding increase to meet this growing need. The family centre, desperate to justify the need for increased funding, agreed to an operational review by the government, which has been completed and has resulted in the agency being told it was using its budget properly, was well managed and superbly led.

Minister, you are tearing the heart out of children's mental health services in my community. The funding you are providing for fundamental, core services to children and families in need is simply not enough to meet the increasing need, and you cannot be allowed to get away with it. Staff cuts announced today will double by the end of this fiscal year unless you are prepared to do the right thing and provide this desperately needed funding.

The provision of mental health services to children cannot be viewed as anything other than vital. Today I put the minister on notice that all of us advocating for the necessary funding will not rest until she and the Premier treat this as the absolute priority it should be.

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): On this the last day of the 37th Parliament, and my last day in any Parliament for that matter—

Applause.

Mr Christopherson: I hope that's wishing me well as opposed to "good riddance and glad you're going."

I had a chance a couple of weeks ago in a member's statement to thank all the dedicated staff I've had personally over the years. Today what I'd like to do is express my thanks to all the support people who make this place operate, all the way from the Clerk and the staff at the table, to the Sergeant-at-Arms, to the people who work in the mailroom, to the people who clean this building, all the folks who actually make this place go.

I was struck that when you walk up the stairs today you could literally shave based on the reflection of the floor; that's how beautiful it is and we need to thank those people who do that every day. We need to thank the Hansard people who put up with so much from all of us. Harold in the parking lot is just perfect in dealing with those problems we all have and we want to thank him; the page support staff who make it possible for the pages to be here and provide the support they do; the people down in the restaurant and the snack room; the ministry staff who are non-partisan and are there to do the job for the people of Ontario; the leg counsels who write laws when we have great ideas and when we have boneheaded ideas—they're to be thanked for what they do. There are the people down at the information desk who are there to greet the public, make this place comfortable for them and let them know that this is their House, that this is the people's House.

Lastly, I saved a special moment to thank the security staff. We talk a lot in this place about the policy of where that fine line is between public access to a democratic building and providing security for the public and people who work here. That's fine and dandy, but at the end of the day, it's the individual security people who have to make that immediate call when the adrenaline is pumping and there is the possibility of things getting out of hand. They have to make that judgement. I want to say to the security staff that you are professionals who do an admirable, honourable job for the people of this place and this province, and I want to thank you for what you have done to make this the kind of place it is.

CANADIAN BASEBALL HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): A decade ago, many of us in this House and people across this province watched spellbound as the Jays won a second consecutive World Series. Few of us will ever forget watching Joe Carter leap in the air as he realized he had hit the three-run homer that would win the World Series. I remind my colleagues of that moment because this weekend I'll be proud to be on hand when Joe Carter is inducted into the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame in St Marys, Ontario.

Joe Carter will be inducted, with former California Angels and Chicago White Sox pitcher Kirk McCaskill; former president of Baseball Canada and former director of the International Baseball Federation youth commission, Richard Belec; and Vancouver's Asahi Japanese baseball team of the 1930s.

The Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum is in St Marys, because that is where Adam Ford, an early settler, organized a league after chronicling the first recorded game played in nearby Beachville, Ontario.

I also want to take this opportunity to remind all members that the Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, at 386 Church Street in St Marys, is one of many treasures found in my great riding of Perth-Middlesex, and I invite you and the member for Windsor-St Clair to visit over the summer recess.

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Like my colleague from Hamilton West said, this may be the last day of the session. Unlike him, I hope to return. But that's certainly someone else's decision and not mine at this point.

I'd like, on behalf of the Liberal caucus, to thank everyone in this place: the ushers and pages for their excellent work ensuring that the chamber runs smoothly; our friends at the table, who always have sound advice and good judgment, even though we often don't agree; Hansard, and the dedication and accuracy that Hansard brings to their job; the broadcast and recording services, who at least try to make us look good and, considering what they have to work with, do a fairly good job of it;

and of course, the public servants in the Legislative Assembly—the library, food services. We all benefit from their outstanding contributions.

Democracy has a beautiful and vibrant home in this province and Legislature, and we thank all those dedicated staff and volunteers for helping make it work.

We're also proud of and want to say thanks to the thousands of Ontario government workers who make all of us proud.

On behalf of the members on this side of the House, we want to thank all the MPPs in here of all parties. We have an important obligation to represent the people of our communities, and I don't think anyone here takes that responsibility lightly.

Finally, we want to thank the media. They have a hard job listening to all of us down here and trying to make sense of it. There's always a tendency in this business to shoot the messenger—I know I have fired a few shots myself—but the media bring professionalism in bringing the news to the people.

This will be an interesting summer and definitely, from our perspective, time for an election. I look forward to the people of Ontario having the opportunity to choose change. But unfortunately, we have a feeling we might all be back here on September 22 nonetheless.

Have a good holiday—except you, sir. I understand that you will be leaving for colder, icier patches, if you will. We wish everyone the very, very best.

VISITORS

Ms Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to take this opportunity, if I may, to introduce my family. They're here in the House today. For that reason, I hope that everyone might want to behave. I'm very happy to introduce constituents of mine of course, my family: my big brother, Walter Pizzolitto; his wife, Linda; the twins, Nadia and Niklas; the eldest, Dominic; and my mother, Ada Pizzolitto.

Hon Dan Newman (Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): If we're all introducing family that's here today, I'd like everyone to welcome my father, Victor Newman, who's here today to watch question period.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Not to be outdone, my wife and daughter are here in the members' gallery east, and they're joining us as well.

FOREST FIREFIGHTING

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): After a briefing this morning, I thought members might be interested in the forest fire situation in Ontario.

While there has been cooler, rainier weather in the northwest part of the province, the fire situation remains very serious. Without additional rain in the next few days, conditions could again become extreme.

There are currently 51 active forest fires of various sizes, burning over an area of almost 184,000 hectares.

Ontario is spending about \$2 million a day to combat these fires. Our priority is to protect human life and property as well as timber values.

1350

Ontario's 700 fire rangers and 600 contract firefighters are being supplemented by over 500 firefighters and support staff from as far away as British Columbia, including Alberta and the Northwest Territories. All our nine water bombers are in operation and we've got four water bombers from outside the province also in operation. We're also using 94 helicopters in support of firefighter operations moving firefighters from one zone to another.

The restricted fire zone in the southern half of the western part of the province has been lifted, but much of the north remains a restricted fire zone. That means that all open burning, including campfires, is banned, with a goal of ensuring that no fires caused by humans will add to the difficult situation that we face already. I call on the residents of those parts of northern Ontario covered by the restricted fire zones to strictly observe these provisions. Don't start a campfire or conduct any outside burning.

I would also ask members of the public and stakeholders to be patient with their requests to the office of the Ministry of Natural Resources. The ministry is directing its focus almost exclusively on fighting these forest fires.

TVONTARIO

Mrs Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier): I'm pleased today to see that my resolution of last fall with respect to the board of directors of TVO has had a positive effect on the government. For quite some time now the franco-phone community has been very concerned over the lack of adequate representation on the board of directors of TVOntario, also responsible for the French-language educational television network TFO.

The fundamental problem is that very few of the current board members speak any French or they have little or no understanding of French language and culture. How can one govern with competence a television network that operates in a language one does not comprehend?

I'm proud to say that recently a third francophone, Madame Diane Simard, has been appointed to the 13-member board of directors of TVOntario. Madame Simard is a credible member of Toronto's francophone community, active in local institutions, and she has a background as an independent radio and television producer.

Croyez-moi, sa nomination au conseil d'administration est un pas important pour rectifier le déséquilibre actuel au sein du conseil. C'est une mesure positive qui démontre que ce gouvernement a su écouter les demandes de la communauté francophone exprimées par l'entremise d'une députée.

I have just heard that the newly appointed vice-chair of TVO is a current francophone board member, Madame Gisèle Chrétien, president of Collège Boréal of Sudbury.

I therefore wish to thank the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, Dianne Cunningham, and the president of TVOntario, Isabel Bassett, for listening to the requests of the francophone community. I look forward to the next step, which should be two separate linguistic sections working together for the benefit of all in educational television.

REQUEST TO INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I beg to inform the House that pursuant to section 30 of the Members' Integrity Act, 1994, I've laid upon the table a request from the member for Windsor West to the Honourable Coulter Osborne, Integrity Commissioner, for an opinion on whether the Honourable Tony Clement, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, has contravened the act.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE RATES CONTROL ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LE CONTRÔLE DES TAUX D'ASSURANCE-AUTOMOBILE

Mr Smitherman moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 129, An Act to control automobile insurance rates / Projet de loi 129, Loi visant à contrôler les taux d'assurance-automobile.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will please say "aye."

All opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1355 to 1400.

The Speaker: All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 34; the nays are 0.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Would you like your explanation or a point of order first?

Mr Smitherman: Explanation first. The bill assists Ontario's hard-put motorists by capping automobile insurance rates for a limited period of time.

On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to move second and third reading of the bill.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, Government House Leader): On the same point of order, Mr Speaker: I was pleased to be the only member of the House to vote for his bill when it came to a voice vote. I'd like to read the bill first before we pass it at second and third reading.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS EMPLOYMENT PROTECTION ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LA PROTECTION DE L'EMPLOI DES POMPIERS VOLONTAIRES

Mr Arnott moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 130, An Act to amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997 in order to protect the employment of volunteer firefighters / Projet de loi 130, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la prévention et la protection contre l'incendie afin de protéger l'emploi des pompiers volontaires.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): This bill amends the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997, with respect to salaried firefighters who also work as volunteer firefighters. It provides that if a person is denied membership in an association of firefighters, is expelled or disciplined by the association, or engages in reasonable dissent within the association in connection with this kind of dual employment, the association is not permitted to require the employer to refuse to employ the person as a salaried firefighter, terminate his or her employment as a salaried firefighter or refuse to assign the person to fire protection services.

This bill is identical in principle to my amended Bill 30, which I presented to the House last year. I want to bring it to the attention of the House again. It's my understanding that Justice Adams's report that the Min-

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Curling, Alvin	Martin, Tony
Bartolucci, Rick	Di Cocco, Caroline	McMeekin, Ted
Bisson, Gilles	Dombrowsky, Leona	Parsons, Ernie
Bountrogianni, Marie	Duncan, Dwight	Peters, Steve
Boyer, Claudette	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Bradley, James J.	Gravelle, Michael	Prue, Michael
Brown, Michael A.	Kormos, Peter	Pupatello, Sandra
Caplan, David	Kwinter, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony
Christopherson, David	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Smitherman, George
Churley, Marilyn	Levac, David	Sorbara, Greg
Cordiano, Joseph	Marchese, Rosario	
Crozier, Bruce	Martel, Shelley	

ister of Public Safety and Security commissioned earlier this year will be released to the public today. My bill is intended to remind the government that this issue needs to be addressed.

AMATEUR BASEBALL
MONTH ACT, 2003
LOI DE 2003 SUR LE MOIS
DU BASEBALL AMATEUR

Mr Wettlaufer moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 131, An Act to proclaim August 2003 as Amateur Baseball Month / Projet de loi 131, Loi proclamant le mois d'août 2003 Mois du baseball amateur.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short explanation?

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): Amateur baseball is thriving in Ontario. There are 250 local baseball associations active in the province today. They involve players of all ages: from eight years of age to over 21 years of age. Local baseball associations hold their own championships for teams, involving tens of thousands of players. In August this year, the city of Windsor will host all seven of the elimination championships that send representative teams to the Baseball Canada National Championships, involving 70 baseball teams, representing all provinces, and including over 2,000 players and coaches. Proclaiming August 2003 as Amateur Baseball Month would recognize the contributions that baseball makes to the well-being of communities and individuals. It would also help to increase the profile of amateur baseball in Ontario and honour baseball coaches for their invaluable work.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(ii), the House shall meet from 6:45 pm to 12 am (midnight) on Thursday, June 26, 2003, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1407 to 1412.

The Speaker: Would the members take their seats, please.

All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic
Arnott, Ted
Baird, John R.
Barrett, Toby
Bartolucci, Rick
Beaubien, Marcel
Bountrogianni, Marie
Boyer, Claudette
Bradley, James J.
Brown, Michael A.
Caplan, David
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Brad
Clement, Tony
Coburn, Brian
Cordiano, Joseph
Crozier, Bruce
Cunningham, Dianne
Curling, Alvin
DeFaria, Carl
Di Cocco, Caroline
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duncan, Dwight
Elliott, Brenda
Flaherty, Jim

Galt, Doug
Gerretsen, John
Gilchrist, Steve
Gill, Raminder
Gravelle, Michael
Guzzo, Garry J.
Hardeman, Ernie
Hastings, John
Hodgson, Chris
Hudak, Tim
Jackson, Cameron
Johns, Helen
Johnson, Bert
Kells, Morley
Kennedy, Gerard
Klees, Frank
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Levac, David
Maves, Bart
Mazzilli, Frank
McDonald, AL
McMeekin, Ted
Miller, Norm
Molinari, Tina R

Munro, Julia
Mushinski, Marilyn
Newman, Dan
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Parsons, Ernie
Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Pupatello, Sandra
Runciman, Robert W.
Ruprecht, Tony
Sampson, Rob
Smitherman, George
Sorbara, Greg
Spina, Joseph
Sterling, Norman W.
Stewart, R. Gary
Tascona, Joseph N.
Tsubouchi, David H.
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Wood, Bob
Young, David

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles
Churley, Marilyn
Kormos, Peter

Marchese, Rosario
Martel, Shelley
Martin, Tony

Prue, Michael

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 74; the nays are 7.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to allow Mr Wood the opportunity to put a motion to refer his bill, Bill 4, An Act to proclaim Genocide Memorial Week in Ontario, to second reading and committee.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In light of the fact that this government has referred to greater accountability in all of their throne speeches since 1995, and in light of the fact they've also mentioned greater accountability in all of their budget speeches since 1995, I seek unanimous consent to give second and third reading to Bill 6, An Act to amend the Audit Act to provide for greater accountability of hospitals, universities, colleges and other organizations that receive grants or other transfer payments from the government or Crown agencies.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I heard some noes.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In honour of the finance minister's refusal to confess to Ontarians that they plan to sell off Hydro One to cover up their \$2-billion deficit, I ask for unanimous consent to declare this, Ontario's fourth smog day of this summer 2003, Smog Day Ecker.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: As this is the last day before August that we can proclaim this and in view of the level of co-operation there was on first reading, I would like to seek unanimous consent to move second and third reading of An Act to proclaim August 2003 as Amateur Baseball Month.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

VISITORS

Hon Ernie Hardeman (Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I just want to remind the House that we have been so well served by a page from Oxford county, Lucas Mol, for the past number of weeks. He spoke so highly of this Legislature that today we have with us the family of Lucas: Rob Mol; his mother, Kathy Gorham-Mol; and his two sisters, Jacoba and Leah. I would like the Legislature to welcome them to Queen's Park from the great riding of Oxford county.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Just before we begin with the member for Niagara Centre—I was going to do this just before question period, but everybody is probably here now for the votes anyway. As you will know, this will probably be the last day for our pages. I think all the members would like to join me in thanking this wonderful group of young people.

To all of the families watching, you can be very proud. They've all done a very good job, including our good friend Penny, who has been just excellent. I had to make sure I cleaned out the dog biscuits we've been sending to her because I didn't want to leave them here over the summer.

We have a few on a point of order. I think the member for Niagara Centre was first and then we'll get to all the members.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent for second and third reading of Bill 110, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, so that every worker in this province can have a long weekend this July 1 holiday.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

1420

MEMBER FOR OAKVILLE

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Of course we have no idea when an election will be held—it could be this fall, the spring or this summer; the writs

could be issued later today—but I understand we have unanimous consent for each party to make a statement on the pending retirement of the member for Oakville.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

To begin is the government House leader?

Hon Mr Baird: I'm pleased to rise on behalf of my caucus colleagues, and your former caucus colleagues from your days in your first two terms before you took the chair, to pay tribute to you.

Mr Carr, our Speaker, the member for Oakville, will be leaving Ontario this fall to coach a professional hockey team in London, England: the London Racers.

You were first elected in 1990, which was no small accomplishment for a Conservative to get elected in that year. It was not a great year for Conservatives, only capturing 23% of the vote, but you bucked the tide and were elected.

From 1990 to 1995, you were a hard-working and dedicated member in your job as critic for economic development and were very active in putting together the Common Sense Revolution. I'm pleased, as I'm sure you are and all members of the House, that your wife Teresa and your daughter Makenzie are in the gallery. Your other children, Lindsay and Gavin, I'm sure, are watching on TV or will see this.

In government, you worked hard as parliamentary assistant to the Solicitor General. You worked with Janet Ecker to consult and develop our strict discipline facilities concept, the boot camp for young offenders. You've worked hard and represented your constituents in Oakville for 13 years, displaying courage and conviction. As Speaker from 1999 to today, you have, I know, endeavoured to work hard and deliver decisions fairly and impartially. Your decisions and comments certainly get a good amount of emotion from all sides of the House, I think it would be fair to say.

This job we have as members of the Legislature, as politicians, is a difficult and demanding one, and it's one which you have worked hard at for some 13 years. Your constituents are tremendously fortunate to have the results of that hard effort, that hard work that you've made on their behalf in Oakville, both in opposition, in government and then the last four years as Speaker.

You have a difficult job. It's often a lonely one when you of course aren't sitting in any caucus, and I'm sure you've had many difficult decisions to come to and had to make them alone. I know you've been very capably served by a very knowledgeable table.

On behalf of my caucus colleagues on the government side, we want to wish you and your family well as you embark on what is an exciting career for you in coaching professional hockey on the other side of the pond. All the very best to you, sir.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I'm very proud to rise on behalf of Dalton McGuinty, our leader, and the Liberal caucus to say a few words about our Speaker, Gary Carr.

I first met Gary in 1975 as one of 6,666 Sudbury Wolves hockey fans who were screaming at this very young and tenacious goalie for the Toronto Marlies, who had an outstanding ability to block every puck that came his way. The Toronto Marlies won the series against the Sudbury Wolves in the seventh game of the of the OHL championship series. They went on to the Memorial Cup, and the Toronto Marlies won the Memorial Cup that year. Gary was voted the most valuable goalie. He was a member of the all-star team and is always known as a Memorial Cup champion. Speaker Carr showed courage and leadership as that young goalie years well beyond his very tender age at the time.

Gary continued to be a champion. Since 1990, he has championed the needs of the people in the Oakville area, having been re-elected in 1995 and 1999 because the people were convinced that Gary Carr would represent them with courage and leadership.

In his last four years as Speaker, all of us in this House have been impressed with his outstanding interpersonal skills, his ability to communicate with individuals, with groups, with pages, with visitors who come to this building. He exemplifies what politics is all about in the form of representation with honour.

I'm reminded that courage has been defined as the quality it takes to look at yourself with candour, your adversaries with kindness, and your setbacks with serenity. Gary, you've done that as the Speaker in this place. You have definitely made a difference. You have created your own legacy within the democratic process, and this too has been built on courage and leadership.

Now, as this chapter as a representative closes, Gary has the courage and leadership to embark on a new role, returning to the world of hockey to share his leadership and his courage with other hockey players. As coach and mentor of the London Racers in the Elite Ice Hockey League, he will bring the team on the road to cities like Sheffield and Nottingham and Belfast and Coventry, Glasgow, Cardiff and Manchester. Home games will be played in the London landmark known as the Alexandra Palace. This building is also known as the People's Palace. How ironic it is that Gary Carr will be leaving the Pink Palace and moving to the People's Palace.

The measure of an individual is the set of principles by which he or she lives. I went on the Web site today, the London Racers' Web site, and I looked at the Coach's Diary. This is what Gary says to the people of London and to his players about his expectations for himself and his players:

"It is my mission to develop and promote a competitive team dedicated to obtaining the highest level of performance and skill development.... Each player must commit to work together as a team, have a completely unselfish attitude ... direct all of our combined efforts toward a common set of goals, care for each other ... have a mutual respect for each other despite the individual differences in personalities and character that always exist in a group of individuals, never be outworked ... bring enthusiasm and concentration" in order to reach

their full potential, and finally, "accept total responsibility for our actions."

Indeed, Gary Carr has done that as Speaker and as representative. He has lived the mission statement he will now ask others to live. I know that today Gary's beautiful 83-year-old mother is watching. I want you to know that everyone in this chamber looks up to your son with respect, admiration and appreciation for his commitment to public office and to people.

To Teresa and your children, Lindsay, Makenzie and Gavin, enjoy the ride you're experiencing. You experience this ride because your husband and father has the courage and leadership ability to accept new challenges and to be a real champion.

Congratulations, Gary. Good luck.

The Speaker: The member for Niagara Centre.

1430

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Thank you kindly, Speaker. You understand that there are only two occasions that prompt these sorts of things to be said about a member of the Legislature. Obviously, this is the preferable occasion.

I've always found it strange that when people, as members of the Legislature, persevere and go back for that last election and get the stuffing kicked out of them by their opponent, they are not feted in the same way, but that's just the way this parliamentary convention has established itself. I know that you, among other things, would be the first to protect parliamentary convention. You've demonstrated that in the most capable way.

But I remember after your election, when you were a member of the third party over here, just about in this area of the Legislature. I recall you, as I believe do others who were fortunate enough to have been here then, as an extremely effective, well-prepared, studied member of the opposition who posed questions in an extremely capable way but who clearly had done his homework. That isn't always the case, and from time to time we witness those occasions where people will perhaps pose questions without having done the thorough research. You demonstrated yourself to be an extremely effective opposition member. I for one believe that's an incredibly important thing. I believe people should have to be proven and demonstrated as extremely effective opposition members before they acquire the power and the trappings that accompany it in government. I take a look at remarkable governments of the last 15 years, all of which lacked that element and in fact have suffered for it.

Again, it is noteworthy that you were elected as a Conservative in 1990. I speak to some of your colleagues here from time to time who talk oh-so-proudly about their political skills, talking about how well they won their riding in 1995 and 1999. I say, no, the real test is when you can get yourself elected or re-elected when the polls aren't with you. We as New Democrats understand that full well.

But you proved yourself in 1990, and you proved yourself to your constituents, such that your re-election in 1995 was a certainty, but not unjustified. I recall that

election. I recall your returning to the House. I know that a whole lot of us expected you to become a member of the cabinet. I think you expected yourself to become a member of cabinet. For any number of reasons, good or not so good, that didn't happen. But I put to you that at the end of the day, you've occupied a position here of stature, one that has all of the trappings attached to it, and you've never had to answer a single question; you've never been the victim of a single FOI; you've never had to account for a single expenditure. I put to you that you've got it made over any of your colleagues who ever aspired, especially who successfully lobbied, to get into cabinet. Some of them are long gone. You're still here, unblemished, unimpeached and unquestioned. It truly is one of the better jobs around here. But it's a job that you've performed in an exemplary way. It's been a long time since we've had a Speaker who has fulfilled his or her responsibilities with firmness but who has at the same time maintained a sense of humour, who at the same time has avoided arrogance, and who at the same time has avoided, I say to you as well, hubris.

I want to thank you on behalf of New Democrats for your role as Speaker. Of course, every member of this Legislature voted for you. You've heard them tell you that. All 102 members repeat that over and over again. After your successful election, it's as if your opponents voted for you themselves. There wasn't a single person in this House who would identify themselves as somebody other than a supporter of Gary Carr. But I put to you that, at the end of the day, you've demonstrated the true independence a Speaker ought to display. You've also demonstrated leadership. Among other things, it's tradition that the Speaker speaks for the assembly; you've done that. You've done that with courage; you've done it when it meant consequences for you in terms of your political life and perhaps the role you have in your community. You've done it in the true spirit of a Speaker who is independent and who has to come to the protection of Parliament and those parliamentary institutions.

You will undoubtedly be documented and recorded in every volume of Beauchesne, Erskine May and all those parliamentary guides that will be published from this point on. You will undoubtedly be in the index, and for good reason. You've made some strong and important rulings. You've done them fairly. You've been outspoken when that has been required of you. We admire you for that, and I put to you that the people of Ontario admire you for that.

I suggest that if there were a provincial popularity poll right now, you've managed to remove yourself far enough from partisan politics that you would top any popularity poll of politicians. You're really not seen that much as a politician and more as the person who has guided this very raucous and polarized Parliament through what have been some very painful parliamentary sessions, I think, for all of us here in this assembly.

We wish you well, and we thank your family for their contribution, because, of course, your family makes great

sacrifices, as they do for any member of the Legislative Assembly. We know you have high regard for them. You've referred to them and spoken of them often. You've expressed your pride in your kids and your hopes for their futures. You've demonstrated your commitment to your family. Often you make reference to your mother preferring us over the afternoon soaps, and for the life of me, I can't understand why. But I say to Mrs Carr that it's been a pleasure sharing these afternoons and some of these evenings with the Speaker's mother; we appreciate the attention you've paid to us. New Democrats, to our credit, have done everything they could to give Carr as much camera time as possible.

Speaker, we thank you for your contribution to this Parliament and to this province as a member of the assembly and as a Speaker who will, as I say, be noted as one of the important Speakers of this Parliament and whose rulings will be referred to for many years to come. We regret that you will not be in this assembly, because as Speaker, as a government member or as an opposition member, you have truly been a valuable player in this arena, on this rink.

We thank you, and we wish the very best for you and your family's future. We trust that the occasional controversy you've managed to attract will continue to be the case in the future. We look forward to the newspaper reports of those events and wish you well throughout all of them.

The Speaker: I want to thank all the members for their very kind comments. I'm glad I get to say that I won't have to pass them on to the family, though, which I do sometimes.

I want to say to the member for Sudbury—I hate to say it—we also beat Hamilton and Kingston that year. I remember my first speech up there; I actually got booed by them when I went up there and spoke. I said we beat them, and they actually booed me. But it was a fine series and a great tradition.

It's hard to believe 13 years have gone by. In fact, Makenzie was just three years old when I was first elected. I want to thank them very much.

Applause.

1440

The Speaker: Now I know why you moved from there to up there.

When I was first thinking of running, I came back and said to my wife, "I don't care if I get two votes, I've got to run for the nomination." The first thing she said is, "What makes you think I'm going to vote for you?" After that first election was so close, I needed your vote, hon.

I want to thank each and every one of you. It's been a great job and I've enjoyed it a tremendous amount. We look forward to following you. Hopefully, I'll still be able to play on the Legiskaters. I've told a few of you, particularly the better players—Mr Hodgson, Mr Hampton, Mr Gerard Kennedy, a couple of the really good players, Mr Stockwell and Mr Kells—that if your political careers go in the wrong direction, there will always be a place for you on the London Racers. We'll be like

the Toronto Maple Leafs: we'll be a little bit older but we'll be the champions anyway.

Good luck to each and every one of you. I will be following you. I also want to thank the table for their tremendous help and support over the years. They've been just fantastic. As we said earlier, they have been my caucus. And hopefully you may keep a few jobs open for me, because if we aren't doing well by Christmas, I may be back here.

To each and every one of you, good luck. As Canadians, you'll always have a place to go to watch some hockey in London if you make it over there.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: There's something that's been hanging over your head for quite a while now, a number of months. I know your mother has felt very bad about this and you've received a lot of telephone calls about it. I want your mother, Joyce Carr, to know that I have forgiven you for being the only Speaker who has thrown me out of this Legislature in 26 years. Even though it was a terrible call on your part, I've still forgiven you.

The Speaker: You may have forgiven me, but my mother hasn't.

Hon Frank Klees (Minister of Transportation): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I know you'll rule that this is not a point of order, but we do want to wish you that the road ahead will bring you much success and happiness.

The Speaker: I thank all the members again. Just so we don't miss anything—I've lost track—but just in case, motions? No? OK.

ORAL QUESTIONS

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question today is to the Premier. We've been asking the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services for weeks now about her office's interference with Ontario's child advocate, that person who has to assume very heavy responsibilities for the 23,000 vulnerable children in care. When we asked the minister directly about her attempts to muzzle the child advocate, she said, "Neither I, nor any member of this government, has done a single thing in any way to impede the activities of the child advocate."

The truth of the matter, Premier—and this is why I am appealing to you today—is that Ontario's child advocate is being prevented from fully exercising her responsibilities by this minister. Judy Finlay, the children's advocate, said today, "I feel my job is at risk. The viability of the office as an independent voice for children in this province is at risk." Your minister is acting in a way to thwart the activities of the children's advocate in the province of Ontario. My question to you is, what are you going to do about it?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I am not aware of any action that the minister has taken with respect to the child advocacy office. In fact, I am fully supportive of the child advocacy office.

Mr McGuinty: You may be, Premier, but your minister is not. I want to remind you that under your government seven children have died questionable deaths. In the preceding 17 years, none died.

Your minister said she hasn't done a single thing to impede the activities of the child advocate; her actions prove otherwise. According to the child advocate herself, your government is trying to take away her independence. She is saying that your minister wants to censor all reports before they're made public. The children's advocate is saying that your minister wants to be able to veto her decisions about launching an investigation that could implicate the government. Your minister is saying that she wants to sign off on any and all communications that come from the child advocate's office. The child advocate is saying, "They see me as a public servant, even though historically I am to be arm's length from the government."

I repeat, Premier, your minister is getting in the way of the children's advocate's doing her job, which is an important job, to protect the interests of 23,000 children in care. I ask you again, what are you going to do about that?

Hon Mr Eves: I will ask the minister to respond directly herself.

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services): First of all, I want to put on the record that I find it disappointing that the child advocate would take concerns to the media or the opposition instead of working with my office. Issues have been raised that relate to performance appraisals and other human resources issues. It is inappropriate for this minister to handle personnel issues. I do not manage ministry personnel issues—I do not hire; I do not fire—and I think it is important that that is on the record.

Let me say very clearly that no measures have been taken by me or anyone in my office or from the ministry to curtail any measures taken by the child advocacy office to address her ability to do her job effectively. No one tells the child advocate which cases to report on, which children to advocate on behalf of or what needs to be investigated. The child advocate has complete authority to make these determinations.

Mr McGuinty: You are refusing to meet with the children's advocate. She's gone to the media, she's gone public because she's trying to defend 23,000 vulnerable children in the province of Ontario and you won't meet with her.

Over the past several years, she has written over 50 reports that have been critical of your government. She's made very disturbing findings, including the following: she's talked about inadequate facilities with bedsheets that are used as window-coverings and exposed light bulbs as the only source of lighting in some rooms. She's

talked about kids who can't go in the backyard—these are children in your care—because they're going to disturb neighbours. She's talked about dangerous and illegal use of physical and chemical restraints. She's talked about restraints being used inappropriately. She's talked about dangerous activities including physically manipulating youths' arms behind their backs, hands being wrapped together, arms being twisted, staff grabbing youths by the hair, youths reporting difficulty breathing when staff sat on them. That's what this minister has been doing. That's important work, and you have a responsibility to pay some attention to her.

I return to you, Premier: that minister is getting in the way of a children's advocate doing her job and standing up for 23,000 vulnerable children. I ask you, Premier, on behalf of those kids, since this minister won't do the job, what are you going to do about her to protect those kids?

Hon Mrs Elliott: Let me be very clear: I have never prevented the children's advocate's office from writing reports or articles. In fact, the child advocate has written several in the course of the last number of years. No one from my office or from the ministry has ever asked for a sign-off on any reports written. What we have asked for is the courtesy of seeing any reports before they're made public, the same practice we have in place for other agencies—nothing more, nothing less. No one in my ministry or my office tells the child advocate which cases to report, which children to advocate on behalf of or what needs investigation. The advocate has complete authority to make these decisions. Until yesterday, I had never received one piece of communication from the child advocate's office. I would have thought that she, before approaching the media or the opposition, would have expressed her concern—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Time's up. New question?

Interjections.

Mr McGuinty: I want to return on the same matter to the Premier. This is hardly a cheering matter. This is a tragedy. You're going to have to treat this with the seriousness it deserves.

1450

I want to read to you something you are probably not familiar with. It's a copy of the report filed by the children's advocate in May of this year. She says, "Since 1996, six children have died in group homes or institutions in Ontario. Two children died during the use of physical restraints, two children died from successful suicide attempts, one died from assault by a peer, and one youth died of neuroleptic malignant syndrome. The rate of one death per year of children in care is unprecedented in the province of Ontario. All of these deaths were avoidable and unnecessary. There are lessons to be learned from these deaths. Society collectively needs to draw the line in the sand."

I'm asking you today on behalf of those 23,000 children—they're our kids. Their parents have either abandoned them or they're disabled or they're troubled. They might be hard to handle, but they're ours nonetheless. I'm asking you to stand up for those kids. Your

minister is not doing that. On behalf of those kids, I'm asking you to fire that minister and replace her with somebody who's going to stand up for those kids.

Hon Mr Eves: I certainly take the matters he has raised in the House here today, and raised apparently by the child advocate, very seriously. Nobody in this province, I believe, would want to see any child in any program in the province subjected to some of the things he has just reiterated in his question. I would be happy to take the matter under advisement myself, to look at it and to follow a direction or suggestion that's being made by the child advocate.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, we have raised this several times over. Here are the facts to date. Your minister is thwarting the efforts of the children's advocate of Ontario. I urge you to look into this personally. I want you to understand that this minister is trying to stop reports from being made public. She is trying to veto all press releases. She says she's not doing this, but she has not spoken to the children's advocate. Your minister is asking for the final say on investigations that could implicate the government. She has refused to meet with the children's advocate. Seven children have died in care since 1995. None died in the previous 17 years. That speaks volumes.

I think the right thing to do in the circumstances, as evidence of your commitment to those 23,000 kids who are in our care, is to replace your minister and put somebody else in place who will stand up for those kids and work with the children's advocate to protect the interests of children in Ontario.

Hon Mr Eves: I have given him my undertaking that I will look into the matter personally. Obviously the situation with respect to any child in Ontario, in any set of circumstances, deserves the utmost attention and respect of the people of the province of Ontario. I will personally undertake to him that I will look into it.

It's my understanding that the current child advocate has been in her position for some 13 years. She is a staff member of the OPS. She reports directly to an assistant deputy minister. I would quite concur with the comment he has made, that nobody should be there trying to tell her what to put in a report in any way, shape or form. It's my information—but I'm happy to look into it; in fact, I will look into it—that the minister has not done that. I will look into the matter. You have my undertaking. I will report back.

Mr McGuinty: I want to remind you that this has been going on for a long time now. The children's advocate, to my knowledge, has had a good working relationship with other governments. She has failed to be able to establish that kind of a relationship with this minister in particular.

The child advocate was absolutely unequivocal in her comments today. She said, "The viability of the office as an independent voice for children in this province is at risk."

When your minister was asked about these kinds of things a few days ago, she said no, she was not in any

way, shape or form interfering with the work of the children's advocate.

What I'm going to do today, then, Premier, given your determination now, as you've expressed it, to get to the bottom of this, is to ask that after you've conducted your investigation, you report in a public way so that you can tell us where your government is going on this matter, what it is you're going to do to ensure that the children's advocate can in fact carry out her responsibilities, and ask you to tell us how long it is that you're going to take so that you can report in a public way on this very important matter.

Hon Mr Eves: I would be happy to do so, and at the earliest possibility. I'll have to look into the issue. I'll have to have somebody in the ministry and the minister's office give their input into this as well, and I'll report back as soon as possible.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Ontario does not have enough electricity. I think that is painfully obvious. We are now seeing localized blackouts due to transformer failures in a number of communities. Your deregulated, privatized hydro system was supposed to have us rolling in new electricity supply. It hasn't happened. The private generators aren't generating enough electricity.

Premier, the answer is public power. I think you're starting to acknowledge this. It's the government that has negotiated a contract with Manitoba Hydro, or is in the process of doing it. You said the other day that you want to negotiate something with Hydro-Québec. That says to me that what you're starting to recognize is that we need publicly owned electricity. Will you make that commitment to the people now that you're going to give up on electricity privatization and deregulation and return the province to public electricity on a not-for-profit basis?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): We have said repeatedly that we would not part with control of Hydro One. He knows that.

He makes the statement during his question that there isn't enough power supply in the province. If he heard what Terry Young of the IMO said this morning—he said that we do have enough power in the province of Ontario, that what the honourable member refers to as “blackouts” are reductions in power that happen when equipment in the system for the transmission and distribution in various points, having operated at full capacity on extraordinarily hot days—no one in any jurisdiction, not just the province of Ontario, can guarantee that every single piece of equipment in a system that operates at full capacity for four consecutive days, at temperatures in excess of 30 degrees Celsius, that no part of it will ever break down anywhere; there'll never be a switch, there'll never be a transformer, there'll never be anything that doesn't work all the time. He knows full well that that has been the situation not just in this province but in

virtually every jurisdiction that has hydro transmission for many decades.

Mr Hampton: Mr Young also pointed out that it is the responsibility of those who run the power system to have enough of a margin, to have enough of a reserve to ensure that those things don't happen. The IMO report makes clear that we don't have enough of a reserve any longer. Premier, it's also very clear that this province has to get serious about conservation and electricity efficiency. In fact, that should be the number one priority because we could probably reduce the need for electricity by about 15% over the next four years. What has your government done? You've got a sales tax rebate scheme that has reached 1% of the population and you're going to create a committee to study the matter.

Premier, why do you think, when we have warnings of not enough electricity, that merely appointing a committee to study the matter is enough?

1500

Hon Mr Eves: The honourable member is very selective in the parts of the IMO report that he chooses to raise during question period, and he does this consistently on a daily basis. You're really going to be disappointed tomorrow when the temperature drops down to 23 or 24 Celsius. There won't be, in his mind, a skeleton under his bed or a big collusive group gathering together in a closet to plot a blackout somewhere in Ontario.

At least he's been consistent. He rises in his place every day when the weather is warm and he's silent about this issue when the weather is cool. There are lots of things government can control but they can't control the weather.

The IMO report goes on to say that when the 2,500 additional megawatts come on stream later this summer, we will have 3,300 more megawatts of power than we had last summer, which is an 11% increase in the power available, and it says that is more than enough to provide the necessary power for the people of the province. Too bad you didn't take some of these measures when you were the government.

Mr Hampton: Premier, I don't know where you've been, but I've been raising these issues on the cold days, the hot days and the in-between days. As for your story that just around the corner another 2,000 megawatts are going to be available, you've been saying that for three years, and for three years, on multiple occasions, you've been wrong, wrong, wrong. Resorting to prayer now isn't going to help you.

Are you going to bring on new generation or are you not? The private sector hasn't. Are you going to implement an effective energy efficiency strategy or are you not? The people need to know what the strategy is, other than prayer.

Hon Mr Eves: The honourable member is incorrect. I have not been responding that way because, quite frankly, the deal with Bruce Power with respect to an additional unit just came on stream. As he knows, that deal was just made this spring, so how could I have been saying that in this House year after year after year?

You always stand up in your place, you embellish facts, you make them up and then you expect, I guess, that the people out there will actually believe them. I think you're in for a rude awakening whenever that day of reckoning called election day comes.

I couldn't possibly have stood up in this place and talked about the TransAlta plant, which has just been completed. How could I have said last year that it was coming on stream? I didn't. Those facts are totally incorrect and if he has any class at all, he'll stand up and retract the ridiculous statements he made in the House.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My next question is also for the Premier. We know that six troubled children have died during your government's term over the last eight years while being in care of the government. We know as well that the child advocate felt so strongly about this that she went to the media today and said that your minister is trying to muzzle the child advocate, is trying to stop the child advocate from conducting investigations, wants to have control over whether or not the child advocate issues reports or press releases.

You said you'd look into this. Will you determine today that this proposed contract as put forward by the minister and her staff has in fact been rescinded? Will you notify the child advocate immediately that you are calling off any attempt to restrict her investigations and restrict her communications and reports that she may issue? Will you do that today?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): It's my understanding that I've already undertaken to look into the matter, that that is not the case. If it is the case, I will deal with the issue, but I have to get the facts before me before I can deal with it. I've given my undertaking.

I couldn't agree more with the leader of the official opposition and the leader of the third party on the issue that's been raised today. Any time a child in the province dies in the custody of the province, it's a serious matter to be taken seriously and we should be paying attention to those people whom we charge with the responsibility of doing it.

Mr Hampton: I agree that this is a very serious issue. I think it's very serious when a child advocate who has served this province for 13 years—under Conservative governments, NDP governments and I believe before that under a Liberal government—feels so strongly that she has to go to the media.

Premier, you will know that the child advocate's office in every other province in this country is independent. They report to the public through the Legislature, not to the minister. We know that every other child advocate's office in this country has the tools to do their job and to make annual reports to the public.

Six children have died in the last eight years while in the care of your government. Will you let the child advo-

cate of Ontario report to the public, free and clear of the minister's office? Will you ensure that the child advocate's office has the tools and the resources to protect children, rather than, as she has suggested, attempt to muzzle the child advocate? Will you do that, Premier?

Hon Mr Eves: I'd be happy to look into that, but it is my understanding that the child advocate can report to the public now and that she does do the things the leader of the third party suggests. But if there's a better way to do it, I'm always open to suggestions that make sense, and I'm prepared to look at doing so. If, as he says, every other child advocate's office in the country is totally independent and is not a member of the public service in that jurisdiction and they report directly and independently, I'm happy to look into that.

I will point out, as he did point out in his question, that this office has existed since 1990. It has been there during three different political parties' governments, and to this point, nobody has taken that step. But I'm quite happy to look into it. If it's a good system and a good way to do it, I'm quite prepared to look at it.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): New question?

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): My question is for the Premier. Premier, a month ago I brought a child advocacy issue to the attention of your minister, and her response was so pitiful that I late-showed her. When I asked her about children's rights information that had not been printed in three years, this was her response:

"Normally when a backbencher gets a chance to ask a question—it's usually about something of a little more import."

This from a minister who is responsible for protecting 23,000 children in your care; this after a coroner's inquest identified that the child advocate was unable to get this important information for children. I spoke with her yesterday, and she said she still doesn't have it, even though your minister's bureaucrats would say they do. The child advocate has not received this printed information for children in care.

Children are important on this side of the House, and we will not stand by silently while your minister does nothing.

Premier, how can you possibly defend this minister who doesn't understand that the issues of children in care are important and deserve her attention? Why won't you ask her to resign?

Hon Mr Eves: I share the honourable member's concern about children in the province. I don't share her opinion that this minister does not care about children in the province of Ontario. She's standing in her place. I understand the concern over children, and I certainly understand the concern over children who are in the care of the province, and I don't think there's a member in this House who wouldn't share that concern.

I would suggest that we focus on the issues at hand and that we deal with those issues. To start to attack the personal integrity of this minister or any other minister is not helpful to this discussion, quite frankly.

Mrs Dombrowsky: Premier, the issue at hand is that seven children have died and this minister has not sought the advice or the counsel of the person who is responsible for advocating for children in care. That's my point.

I called the child advocate. I could not believe that the minister would not have connected with her. The child advocate herself indicated in an article on the weekend that there was a dynamic tension between herself and the ministry. That should be a flag: "Maybe I should call this person and deal with this tension." It didn't happen.

1510

Because your minister has done nothing but try to silence the advocate, Judy Finlay would say this is her report. Many reports have gone to the desk of the minister. She doesn't even get a response. These reports contain recommendations to protect children in care, and there's been no response from your minister. This is exactly why the office of the child advocate should be separate from the minister and should report to this Legislative Assembly. Thank God the child advocate has done what she's done. She should not be ridiculed for doing what she's done in going to the media. That was a last resort for her.

Premier, will you do the right thing? Will you fire your minister and put someone in that ministry who will look out for children?

Hon Mr Eves: To suggest that somehow the minister is responsible for the deaths of six or seven children who happened to be in the custody of the province of Ontario is kind of politicizing this issue.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Eves: We are going to look into the issue. It is my understanding from talking to the minister that she has absolutely no objection to meeting with the child advocate. She tells me she's never had a request from the child advocate to meet with her, but she's quite willing to do so. Obviously there are different pieces of information in different quarters.

I have given my undertaking to the House that we will look into the matter, and that is exactly what we will do—also the matter raised by the leader of the third party.

CANADA DAY

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship. Canada Day is rapidly approaching, and I know that Ontario traditionally celebrates this very special day with large festivities on the grounds of Queen's Park. This year marks Canada's 136th birthday. How is the province of Ontario commemorating Canada Day?

Hon Carl DeFaria (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors): I thank the hard-working member from the beautiful riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka for the question.

As I announced earlier today, we are indeed hosting Ontario's 37th annual celebration of Canada Day on Tuesday, July 1, from 11 am to 5 pm on the grounds of

Queen's Park. As Minister of Citizenship, I'm very proud to participate again during this year's celebrations.

As Canadians, we have come from different places in the world to this beautiful land. On Saturday, I will be attending a Canadian citizenship ceremony in London, Ontario, which will remind me of the time I became a Canadian citizen just a little bit over a quarter of a century ago.

My ministry, in partnership with the Ministry of Tourism, is hosting this year's festivities. On Canada Day, Toronto will jump up and say to the world, "Welcome to Toronto. Bienvenue à Toronto. Bienvenido a Toronto."

Mr Miller: Canada Day is also a celebration of our ethnic and regional diversity as a province and a nation. It is always wonderful to see Canadians of all backgrounds and ages gathering for the celebration of our great country. Indeed, Ontario is home to an exciting collection of people who make this province one of the most diverse communities in the world.

In my case, I will be celebrating Canada Day at various events around the riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka: in Honey Harbour, Sundridge, South River, Orrville, Pointe au Baril, Huntsville, Gravenhurst, Birks Falls and Bracebridge, to name but a few of the places.

Minister, could you please tell us more about the attractions and main stage features being offered at Queen's Park on July 1?

Hon Mr DeFaria: I hope all members heard what the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka will be doing, and I hope they all celebrate Canada Day in their communities.

Here at Queen's Park, we'll have a 21-gun salute, clowns, interactive games, children's amusement rides, family activities. We'll have Arthur the Aardvark show, the Slam Jam air team, Eric Nagler, Veronica Bolota, Case Madeira Folklore Group, the Yakudo Drummers, the 48th Highlanders of Canada Pipes and Drums—all here at Queen's Park on Canada Day.

That day will remind us who we are as Canadians. We are known and respected all over the world. We are the Canadians people speak about and we're very proud of it.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Minister of the Environment. This week you actually seriously suggested that the backyard barbecue was a bigger problem than coal-fired generation when it came to the smog in Ontario. Of course, Minister, that is absolute nonsense. Your comment is very telling, though. What you've been saying is that when it comes to reducing smog, that's not the job of government.

Let me read you something you said to the Report on Business magazine in February of last year. Asked about government programs to promote energy conservation, programs that would reduce smog, you said, "The private sector asked us to get out of large-scale government conservation programs. Those efforts may have made the odd person feel good, but they have absolutely no effect."

Minister, is that true? Is our province today suffering in large measure under a blanket of smog and teetering on the edge of brownouts because your government gave in to pressure to get out of conservation programs?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Minister of the Environment): Certainly we didn't continue the so-called conservation program of the previous government, the NDP government. They spent millions of dollars and usage of energy kept going up. It was the opinion of the staff, the professional civil service, given to me when I first became minister, that we should discontinue that and start a new program, which I believe the Honourable John Baird is working on. Second, in no way did I say that backyard barbecues somehow cause more smog than coal-fired generation plants. That would be ridiculous, even for me.

Mr McGuinty: What you said about barbecues is now a matter of record, but what you also said when it came to government conservation programs was, "Those efforts may have made the odd person feel good, but they have absolutely no effect." We're going to have more than a month of smog days this summer in Ontario. The Ontario Medical Association tells us that bad air is going to kill over 2,000 people.

In New York state, as a result of their conservation programs, they have conserved the equivalent of 400 megawatts. That's the equivalent of one nuclear reactor unit. In California, they have conserved 14%; they've saved 5,000 megawatts. That's the equivalent of Nanticoke and Lakeview combined. In other jurisdictions in North America they are getting serious about energy conservation. They're cleaning up their air, they're making for a more healthy environment for their citizens, they're creating good high-paying jobs and they're making for a more competitive economy.

My question to you, Minister: when are you going to get it? When are you going to get with it? When are we going to have an aggressive energy conservation program in the province of Ontario?

Hon Mr Wilson: Really, you don't know what you're talking about. The fact of the matter is that good energy conservation programs do exist in parts of the world. It's just that the one that was in place when we came into government wasn't the best, given that energy use was going up—not because new jobs were being created, like over a million jobs on this side of the House, because they actually lost jobs, and not because new industries were moving into the province, because we all know industries moved out. So the program was not that effective.

There are good energy conservation programs in the world and I hope we adopt the best measures and introduce the best one in the world when ours comes forward.

1520

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr AL McDonald (Nipissing): My question is for the Minister of Public Safety and Security. In just a

couple of days, thousands of law-abiding citizens will become criminals because they have failed to meet the deadline for the federal government's gun registry. I've heard from many of my constituents in Nipissing. Northern Ontarians are concerned about this billion-dollar boondoggle. Could you remind my constituents and northern Ontarians of our government's position on the gun registry?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Public Safety and Security): I have to say that many Ontarians—many Canadians—are concerned about the July 1 deadline, especially with the admission by the federal Solicitor General, Wayne Easter, that there had been a crash of the system at the first of the year and approximately 500,000 registrants were suspected lost from the system. Despite the confession, the federal Liberals are pressing on with what I call their power-gone-mad approach to this gun registry. We have serious questions about the integrity of the system, especially the security of information, and we have made the federal government aware of our concerns.

Mr McDonald: As most people are aware, the taxpayers' federation has the cost for the gun registry exceeding \$2 billion by the year 2012. I know our government has been at the forefront of the fight against this waste of taxpayers' money. Could you tell us what support you're receiving from other Ontarians?

Hon Mr Runciman: I think Ontarians generally understand the wasteful nature of the long gun registry. One group that is clearly out of step is the Ontario Liberal Party. Dalton McGuinty, the leader of the Liberal Party, was quoted on CFRB radio in Toronto in February 2000 as saying, "I am a big, huge fan of the gun registry, and it doesn't cost anything." This is the same Dalton McGuinty who, when it comes to recognizing the scope of the SARS disaster in Ontario, is an apologist for his big brothers in Ottawa.

We're told that he's a Premier-in-waiting, but when Ontario faces a crisis he acts like a lackey, a sycophant, a toady of the federal Liberal government. This province deserves better. We deserve a government and a leader who will stand up and fight for Ontario. We're getting that with Ernie Eves and this government.

CANADA DAY WEEKEND

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): My question is to the Premier. Working people in this province need your help. They need your help to get the Canada Day long weekend they deserve. You know that MPPs get Monday as a holiday and get paid for it to boot. Canada Day falls on a Tuesday. You should make Monday a holiday and get people out to our tourist attractions with their families, spending money and helping our troubled provincial economy. Newspapers carried stories yesterday about workers and the stress they're under, working longer hours, working harder.

Making June 30 a holiday is going to be win-win; everybody's going to gain. It's the only logical thing to do. So don't be the grinch who stole the long weekend.

You need a legacy too. Be the guy who creates a long weekend for the deserving, hard-working citizens of Ontario. Will you, Premier?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): As I am sure the honourable member understands, it is a fairly unique situation that June 30 is on Monday and July 1 is on Tuesday. I don't know about him, but I'm sure he, like the rest of us, will be in our ridings working on Monday and Tuesday. I'm afraid I can't acquiesce to his request to make June 30 an annual holiday.

However, I do think that Canadians—not just Ontarians—would sort of look favourably upon some break in the month of February, when other countries honour their first ministers, their leaders, their presidents—their prime ministers, in the case of Canada. I think a Heritage Day in the month of February would be a great idea.

Mr Kormos: I'll tell you what, Premier: New Democrats, as part of our Public Power platform, advocate two new statutory holidays. We're glad you agree. But you see, this year is special, and that's why our bill identifies June 30 for this year alone. You can have a legacy you can be proud of. Pass Bill 110. Give workers a long weekend this year. We'll work on it for the two new stat holidays in years to come. If you want to call it Premiers' Day, God bless; I'm with you. But give workers a long weekend.

The Speaker has given 403 legislative employees a free paid day off so they can have a long weekend to spend with their families. Your caucus has got Monday off. If it's good enough for you, your caucus, good enough for some government employees, why not make it fair for everyone? Give all workers a stat holiday this coming Monday. There's still time—a legacy you can be proud of. Be a hero; don't be a party-pooper. Pass our bill. Make Monday, June 30 a holiday this year only. We'll work on subsequent years in months to come, OK?

Hon Mr Eves: I have to compliment the honourable member on his enthusiasm for this request and this extra-long holiday weekend that he's proposing for this year. I really do think that the appropriate approach is for us to look at a Heritage Day sometime in February.

Hon Frank Klees (Minister of Transportation): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to ask for unanimous consent that we designate, in addition to Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve, the first Monday of every February as Ernie Eves Day.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? I heard some noes.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): The question is to the Premier. I want to return to the matter of the children's advocate and the conduct of your minister. Your minister has informed you that she was never approached by the children's advocate for purposes of a meeting or to establish some kind of a connection. My critic just got off the phone a moment ago with the children's advocate and was informed by Ms Finlay that,

shortly after your minister's appointment, Ms Finlay asked for a meeting with the minister in order that she might brief her. She was informed that that responsibility of briefing her would lie with the bureaucrats, not with the children's advocate.

I tell you this to impress upon you how serious the poisoned relationship is and how it is jeopardizing 23,000 children in care in the province of Ontario. I provide you with that additional information and I ask something that I'd asked earlier, but I think it's important to return to it. Given this new information, given what Ms Finlay has just advised us, given what you now understand, do you not think the appropriate thing to do in the circumstances is to at least set the minister aside and relieve her of her responsibilities while you look into this matter?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The leader of the official opposition knows very well that the context in which the question was asked was whether the child advocate had ever asked to meet with the minister with respect to the issues he raised in the Legislature today. It may or may not be true that the child advocate asked to meet with the minister when the minister was first appointed. He will know that there are many ministries in government with many agencies, and there are many people who ask to meet with ministers. He also will know that in this particular case, this particular advocacy office reports directly to an assistant deputy minister in the ministry. It's the way it was set up.

I've already said during question period that if that is not appropriate, and a more appropriate way of structuring the child advocate's office, as suggested by the leader of the third party, is to have the child advocate report directly to the Legislative Assembly, as indeed do some officers of the assembly who are charged with the responsibility of reporting directly here, we will gladly look into that.

Mr McGuinty: Seven children have died questionable deaths since 1995. That is unprecedented because, in the 17 previous years, not a single one died. Ms Finlay, the children's advocate, has filed a number of reports. She has been very critical of a number of ways in which your government has mishandled these affairs. Your minister said that she has never been contacted by, or never been approached by, or never had a request for a meeting from the children's advocate. The children's advocate informed us that that is not true. She tells us she's approached the minister. It doesn't matter technically whom she is supposed to have approached. The fact of the matter is that seven children have died questionable deaths in Ontario since 1995. You would think some kind of light would go off inside the minister and she would say, "I've got to look into this. I've got to get to the bottom of this. I've got to make sure this doesn't happen again." She has failed to do that. I'm asking you again—and I understand you're going to look into the matter—given this information, is it not appropriate, is it not right, to set aside this minister so we have somebody in place who will establish a good working relationship with the children's advocate and look out for the interests of those children?

1530

Hon Mr Eves: I've given the leader of the official opposition my undertaking that I'm looking into the matter. Obviously, nobody is pleased and everybody is concerned that there have been seven unfortunate deaths of children in the province of Ontario's custody in the last several years. We are going to look into the matter and report back. But to suggest that this is a political issue and that we should ask the minister to step aside because the leader of the official opposition doesn't agree with how she's conducted her duties and that it's inappropriate is, I think, frankly inappropriate itself. I have agreed to look into the matter, I've agreed to report back to the House and I've agreed to look into the matter raised by the leader of the third party as to the way the office is structured and who it reports to.

RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): My question is for the Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, responsible for rural affairs. As you know, communities in my riding have been facing economic challenges lately due to several factors, including the declining demand for tobacco. Many businesses and communities depend on this industry for their economic survival. This government will continue to work with tobacco growers, as we have in the past. What can you do to help the good people in my riding?

Hon Ernie Hardeman (Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I want to thank my colleague and neighbour, both for his question and for his unstinting hard work on behalf of his constituents in his riding of Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant.

Ontario's rural communities sometimes lack the resources to drive their economic development processes internally. That's why our ministry has created a powerful Web-based tool called REDDI. REDDI enables municipalities to access a wealth of provincial data and powerful analysis tools focusing on economic development. When municipal leaders can identify strengths, competitive advantages, current trends and conditions that are affecting their economies, half the battle is already won. REDDI is one program that tackles barriers to economic growth in rural communities.

Another is the business retention and expansion program. The township of Delhi piloted the business retention and expansion program, which was very successful at retaining jobs and diversifying businesses in Delhi, which of course is part of the great riding of Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant.

Mr Barrett: I thank the minister of rural affairs for that explanation. We certainly recognize the work he has done in my riding and his neighbouring riding as well for our industry. As he indicated, that Delhi project was a success. It saved jobs in my riding and helped generate new economic activity. Clearly, these are the types of results that rural residents expect and that people in my

riding look forward to, and the kind of results we need in the future to sustain rural communities.

I also understand that jump teams have been able to assist, with respect to economic development and diversification, where a major industry like tobacco is in decline, not only in my riding but also in the southern part of your riding, Oxford, Brant County, Elgin and beyond. Could you tell us a bit more about the concept of jump teams? I know it's something that came up during our deliberations on the Premier's task force with respect to rural economic development.

Hon Mr Hardeman: Jump teams are specialists in business structure who study a particular community and its situation, and then provide specific, doable recommendations to address local economic issues.

Recently in Napanee, a jump team helped develop a business plan to establish the Upper Canada Woods Co-operative. The jump team provided them with an action plan to create a woodlot co-operative which will maximize their revenues in a sustainable way. We found that sometimes people just can't see the forest for the trees. Jump teams help folks gain perspective on how they can best solve their economic challenges.

These programs are just three of the tools we're using to help rural Ontario. Further, we will soon unveil our rural strategy, further proof of our concrete commitment to rural Ontario, unlike the vacuous, empty promises of the members opposite.

GOVERNMENT ASSETS

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question, in the absence of the Minister of Finance, is to the Premier. It has to do with your plans for selling \$2.2 billion worth of assets, which is a very big part of the budget.

The last time we saw a sale of this size was in 1999, the budget just before the election. In that, when you planned to sell \$2.2 billion in assets, you spelled out in the budget what assets you were going to sell so the public had an idea of what you were going to do. To date, we have not been able to get from you or your Minister of Finance any indication of what you're planning to sell. It's a huge sale, \$2.2 billion worth of assets, presumably major assets of the province. Will you tell the people of Ontario today what assets you are planning to sell to raise the \$2.2 billion?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The honourable member talks about this specific and that specific with respect to the budget. He will know, as I know he goes through every single budget every single year, and quite thoroughly, I might add, that every year there are challenges the government faces with respect to balancing its books, that not every single measure or step taken by the government during the course of the year is outlined in particular or in specifics in the budgetary document.

The job of finding savings, whether it's in how government performs its services or whether it has surplus

assets or whether it has things that could be done better, is never done. We continue to make those efforts. Actually, in last year's budget, not this year's but last year's budget, there was a similar provision made, and he will recall that at the end of the day there was no need to sell any significant assets at all.

Mr Phillips: The people of Ontario have a right to know what in the world you're selling. They got ripped off by you. You negotiated the 407 deal. It was a rip-off, and people have been ripped off ever since, paying enormous toll increases year after year. That's why they are so suspicious and why they say, "Well, what is Mr Eves planning to sell? What of our assets is he going to sell, and is he going to put me on the hook again?"

I repeat: the 407 deal closed May 5, 1999, and an hour later the election was called. The 407 users are still being ripped off. You have put \$2.2 billion of assets to balance the books. They have a right to know what in the world you are going to sell. Can you please tell the people of Ontario today—and I want to know this before you call this election so we have some idea of what you're going to sell off. Can you come clean with the people of Ontario and tell them what you're going to sell for \$2.2 billion so they don't get ripped off like they did with the 407?

Hon Mr Eves: First of all, the honourable member is wrong. Last year was the most recent time in which a budgetary provision was made for the potential sale of assets in the \$2-billion range. It was in last year's budget, not the 1999 budget, when the last provision was made.

The point is that this provision is quite often made in many budgets. He'll recall that last year we did not have to have a significant asset sale to balance the books of the province. He also knows that there is a \$1-billion reserve set aside every year. He also knows that there is a contingency fund that Management Board has that has over \$800 million in it every year. He also knows that we are seeking efficiencies in the operation of government of \$700 million a year, which is less than a cent of every dollar government spends in the province of Ontario.

So his assumption that there has to be some magical solution to make the books balance at the end of the year—we have balanced the books of this province for four consecutive years in a row. We will balance them for the fifth consecutive year in a row.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the Premier's time is up.

1540

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): My question today is for the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I'm proud to be part of a government that has demonstrated such a strong commitment to meeting the long-term-care needs of Ontario's seniors. Not only have we dramatically increased home-care funding since 1995 and long-term-care funding, especially in the last two years, but by yesterday's passage of a property tax cut for

seniors, which Liberal leader Dalton McGuinty doesn't believe they deserve, we've shown our commitment to seniors in Ontario.

I'm very pleased that in my riding of Niagara Falls, the new Bella Senior Care Residence opened recently and will be home to 160 residents. I was at the grand opening. I know how much this move to a brand new home means to my constituents and their families, not to mention the 120 new staff members who are working at Bella. Minister, I would appreciate it if you could tell the House a little more about the tremendous new facility and when you'll be able to visit.

Hon Dan Newman (Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): It's always a pleasure to respond to the honourable hard-working member for Niagara Falls. The new state-of-the-art Bella Senior Care Residence in Niagara Falls is one that will make an incredible difference in the lives of residents, their families and loved ones.

The three-storey facility follows our government's new construction guidelines for long-term-care facilities. It's divided into neighbourhoods for residents, allowing them to develop closer relationships with each other and to feel more at home, because that's what it's all about. Bella Senior Care also offers dining and recreation lounges for residents, secure outdoor space and pastoral care services. The operators of Bella Senior Care Residence have said they will strive to set new standards in long-term care. I wish every resident the very best as they make this new facility their new home.

Mr Maves: I'm very pleased to hear and, when visiting, see at first hand that our government's commitment to long-term care is making such a difference in the lives of residents and families in Niagara Falls. The new beds at Bella Senior Care are yet another example of how we're making long-term-care services even more accessible for seniors all across Ontario. Also recently in Niagara Falls, in our 16,000 bed change-over from D beds in the upgrading, we totally replaced Dorchester Manor with the Meadows of Dorchester facility, which is one of the best I've seen in the province all around.

I know that many more beds are being built in Niagara Falls and throughout the province and I would like to ask the associate minister to please update the House and my constituents on the status of long-term-care bed construction in the Niagara area.

Hon Mr Newman: I once again thank the hard-working member for Niagara Falls for his question. I'm pleased to say that 1,532 long-term-care beds will be built and redeveloped in the Niagara service area as part of our government's unprecedented \$1.2-billion investment in long-term care. In fact, 624 of the beds will be new and 906 beds at eight existing long-term-care facilities will be upgraded to meet the ministry's new design standards.

I'm pleased to report to the House today that 256 new and 523 redeveloped beds have been built and are in operation, and it's anticipated that 160 new beds will be completed in the next month. This morning I happened to be in St Catharines for the opening of the T. Roy Adams

Regional Dementia Care Centre, which has 22 additional beds that are providing much-needed services to the people of St Catharines—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

HYDRO RATES TARIFS D'ÉLECTRICITÉ

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): My question is to the Premier. Ernie, I'm coming to you. Seriously speaking, Premier, one of the large hotels in our community, without naming names, was in danger this morning of having their electricity cut because of the high hydro rates they suffered through this winter and over the year.

Just to share with you some of the hydro bills: in January of last year, prior to the opening of the market, the hydro rate for that particular establishment was about \$12,000. This year in the month of January the hydro rate escalated to \$26,000. If you take a look at the month of March, they paid almost \$10,000 for the same usage prior to market opening; after market opening, we're looking at a bill of \$18,000.

We were able through my constituency office to make arrangements for that hotel to pay the bill over a longer period of time to keep the hotel open. My question to you is: what are you going to do to lower the rates of the hydro bill of this establishment in my riding that has almost been forced to close because of the high hydro rates?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The Minister of Energy can respond.

L'hon John R. Baird (ministre de l'Énergie, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones, leader parlementaire du gouvernement): C'est mon plaisir de répondre à mon cher collègue le député de Timmins-James Bay. Je vais lui dire que le gouvernement a mis en place un plan pour protéger les entreprises de la province qui sont plus grandes que 250 kilowattheures par année. Il y avait un programme pour protéger ces entreprises : chaque fois que leur taux de l'électricité augmentait à plus de 3,8 sous par kilowattheure, ils étaient éligibles pour un rabais qui était originellement contemplé dans les premiers jours de l'ouverture du marché. Je suis fier que vous avez trouvé ce plan que le gouvernement a mis en place pour protéger cet hôtel. Je vais dire que c'est là pour assister toutes les entreprises dans la province ou les autres consommateurs, et aussi que l'on va payer ce rabais quatre fois par année pour protéger ces petites entreprises. Je sais que vous êtes très fier; cela veut dire que le prix est en moyenne cinq sous par heure.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: With the Premier's embracing of an Ontario Heritage Day in question period earlier today, I would ask for unanimous consent for second and third reading of my bill, Bill 65, that would declare the second

Monday in June to be Ontario Heritage Day and a statutory holiday.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

MEMBER FOR OAKVILLE

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Even though it's probably not a point of order, I would just like to rise in the House today and add my congratulations to you as you move on to a new career. I can only say that we all, on every side of this House, appreciate the tremendous effort that you have put forward on behalf of the people of Ontario during your term as Speaker of this place.

I know that it's not exactly an easy job from day to day, having watched several occupants of that chair try to bring order and discipline to sometimes unruly members, although I must admit you must have done something because today was relatively peaceful compared to some of the days here.

I think that probably speaks to the respect that you have earned. I know that the members, including myself, don't always agree with the opinions and rulings of Speakers, but that's why we have Speakers, quite frankly. We have them there to lend some objectivity, some dignity and some respect to this institution of Parliament. Each and every one of us is elected in our own ridings, regardless of political party, to do the best job we can do to represent our constituents and the people of Ontario, to try to make their lives a little bit better and their corner of the province a little bit better place. It is really a thankless job that the Speaker has, most often to give rulings that he or she knows will not be agreed upon by probably close to 50% of the members but to maintain that sense of decorum, dignity and respect for the very institution of a democratic society that we have and are fortunate to have in Ontario, in this great country of Canada. You have certainly distinguished yourself in that regard. Ontario's loss perhaps will be the UK's and London's gain, especially with respect to your particular special love of hockey and life that will take you and your family there. We wish you nothing but the best.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I thank the Premier very much. I know he's an avid hockey fan and a season ticket holder with the Toronto Maple Leafs. I want to wish him all the best if he does come over. Of course, as Canadians we always like to have a little touch of Canadiana when we're in London. If he does get over there and wants to come and see the team, we'd be pleased to have him. We're not quite the Toronto Maple Leafs, so it might not be the calibre, but certainly the arena is a little bit unique. I know with your love of the game we would love to have you there and it would be an honour to see you there to watch the team play. With your love of the game, having watched the Toronto Maple Leafs, you may be getting a few calls from me asking for a few tips along the way. As somebody said, it

looks like I've gone from one blood sport to another blood sport, and it may actually be an easier job that I'm going to. Some days I don't know whether that's true. But we're going to miss you all, and hopefully you'll all be able to follow my progress. If we have as much fun as we've had here, we certainly will enjoy it very much. So all the best to each and every one of you, and thank you very much.

1550

PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I understand we have unanimous consent to waive petitions but that they may be filed with the Clerk's table today.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Agreed? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Can we ask again?

Interjection: When you hear the question, you might want to answer differently.

The Speaker: Just so we're clear, the question is whether we could waive it and have the petitions filed with the table.

Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, Government House Leader): I move that pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 41, An Act to implement Budget measures, when Bill 41 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill, without further debate or amendment, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may then be immediately called; and

That, when the order for third reading is called, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That no deferral of the second and third reading votes pursuant to standing order 28(h) shall be permitted; and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr David Christopherson): The government House leader may comment on the motion.

Hon Mr Baird: I'm pleased to rise to this motion, and I think the House leader for the official opposition has a point of order.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent to allow each caucus five minutes to pay tribute to three members who are retiring imminently: in order, Mr Hodgson, Mr Christopherson and Mr Hastings. That's five minutes for each caucus.

The Acting Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Agriculture and Food): It's my pleasure today to pay tribute to my colleague Chris Hodgson. He is retiring from politics at a very young age. I think it's important today to talk a little bit about his life in politics and the things that he has done at this stage.

Let me say first of all that we'll miss him greatly in the House. He has been one of the people that many of us who came in 1995 had the opportunity to learn from. From that perspective, I have to say personally that I will miss him greatly. He spent a lot of time ensuring that I didn't make all the wrong moves, although I made some of them.

Chris was born in Millbrook and spent his early years, all of his life per se, in Haliburton county. He had a wonderful life, as a young man, playing sports and being involved in all sorts of activities in the community. He was probably a little less focused on education than other things, but certainly involved in his community, and it shows in the things that he's done since. He went to Trent University, graduated in 1985. I've said to him that I won't tell you what age he was when he was doing all of this, but you can guess.

His political life started pretty early, though. He became the reeve of Dysart township and the warden of Haliburton county in 1993. He also served on a health committee, and I think if we had known that along the line, he would have had a different provincial political career. But he kept that secret from us. He has been involved in politics at the provincial level since he came here in a by-election in 1994. As you will remember, Mr Speaker, it was a pretty big by-election for the Conservative government. It was something that we believe was the start of a ripple that turned Ontario blue. We, in the Conservative third party, thought at that time that we were pretty lucky to attract a person with the talents of Chris Hodgson. He was quickly recognized by the Premier. He was utilized heavily because he is tied very carefully to the north, to the outdoors, fishing, hunting—he loves all those things. So as soon as we were elected in 1995 he became the Minister of Natural Resources and Northern Development. Boy, did the community love him in those two portfolios.

From the beginning he was thought of as a person who could find practical solutions to very difficult issues. He could make magic with consensus, if you will. He brought people of differing interests together. Maybe he just locked them in the room and threw the key away—

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): With a case of beer.

Hon Mrs Johns: "With a case of beer," my colleague says. I don't know that. He was able to build this consensus and we all sat back both in caucus and cabinet and watched his magic as he did deal after deal that set the stage for what he's going to be known for in his retirement.

He was able to work co-operatively with hunters and animal rights activists. He introduced and amended a Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act that hadn't been changed in 50 years. He preserved the environment. I think when he leaves here he's going to be known as Mr Parks because he did so much work on the Living Legacy. He was the person who had the vision about the biggest expansion of parks in the province of Ontario.

At one time in 1997 he had both that ministry and Management Board, and when we came back after the election in June 1999, he moved to just being at Management Board. Many people, especially from northern Ontario, thought that was quite a demotion for him, to lose northern mines. Of course from there, we know he went on and did many things. The gaming file was wonderfully handled by Mr Hodgson. He created a responsible gaming environment and at the same time rejuvenated the horse racing industry.

He worked as the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and developed a new Municipal Affairs Act, which hadn't been changed in 150 years, and brought consensus to that.

I can encapsulate his work by something Mayor Hazel McCallion from Mississauga said. All of us know that the mayor is a little challenging sometimes, that it's difficult to get consensus with her sometimes, but she expressed her disappointment when Chris Hodgson decided not to run again: "He was always open and accessible and made an excellent minister who understood the issues facing Ontario municipalities. His advocacy and support of municipalities will be greatly missed. He was the best Minister of Municipal Affairs that we have had in a long, long time."

Although I've talked a lot about Chris's political career, I think I have to say there are other things that are important. His riding is very important to him because he loves the riding he is elected to. He speaks highly of it; he stands for it.

The other thing he loves, probably more than anything in the world, is his family. He has a family that is very important to him. He has a wife, Marie, who is a wonderful young woman. She looks much younger than Chris, especially now that he has developed from the fair-haired boy of the Premier to the grey-haired scholar in the stands. He also has four kids who my kids have been fortunate enough to know: Clayton, Cody, and two daughters, Charlotte and Caroline. Caroline was born after Chris came to the House. They're a wonderful family.

One of the things you always read when you go into these little places that talk about good sayings is that many years from now you won't be remembered for what you did or you didn't do, but you will be remembered by

the look in a young child's eyes. From that perspective, I want to say that Chris Hodgson will be remembered really well, because his children think the world of him. He spends time with them. I am always talking to him as he is running to a hockey game because all four kids play. They're involved all summer long in fishing and hunting and playing chess; I'm sure he has those kids reading history books and planning for one of them to go into politics as he is in a long line of people, although he guarantees me that that's not the case, that he's going to change history here.

Let me say that Chris is a wonderful guy. I expect to see him back here in the future, and I know that he will make a difference in politics again.

I know I speak for all of my colleagues, both on this side of the House and throughout the House, as I say that we wish him well. We wish him happiness with his family. We hope that he has a wonderful career where he can spend the time that he wants to with his family, because it's so important to him. We hope, especially I hope, that he'll be back in politics someday in this province.

1600

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): It is my honour and privilege, on behalf of Dalton McGuinty, our leader, and all the members of the caucus of the Liberal Party, to pay tribute to an individual whom I have come to know and respect.

Chris Hodgson, the member from Haliburton-Victoria-Brock, has been a person within this place whom we have watched very closely. As a matter of fact, there were many times that we thought he was an heir apparent to Mike Harris. His quiet and deliberate attitude says that he has the character of great leadership. So paying tribute to you today, Chris, is a matter that is not difficult. You are someone whom I've watched and admired.

We all know that public life is difficult and challenging. Public life is not merely a job, as we see it; rather, it's a duty and a responsibility. It's a job for which we have commitment and dedication, and it's a job that we have to earn each day for our constituents.

Chris, when you came here in 1984 in that by-election, we saw this young, black-haired individual. Today as you leave looking just like me, with this kind of white, grey hair, we say, "What has this place done to this wonderful man's hair?" But he has not lost his posture at all.

We know that it requires perseverance and sacrifice when you dedicate yourself to this job. We know, too, about the giving up of family; we who have children all know about that. Your wife, Marie, of course may have said it was blessed for you to leave the house so she could get on with the kids. But we know, too, what it does to a family when we are not there quite as often and the children would like to identify. As my daughter would always say, "Bonding, Daddy; we need to bond."

Now they have this great opportunity, Chris, to bond with you, Marie and the kids, the two boys and the two girls. I know it's quite challenging. You learn more from kids anyhow, so you are going into another school of

learning where they will start to educate you about life itself.

This week we know we have had the unfortunate occasion to bid farewell to many great colleagues that I've worked with. We saw, of course, Lyn McLeod, Sean Conway, the Speaker himself, Gary Carr, and Chris. Of course, there are others we will be bidding farewell to, I understand. As we do that, a part of us as members leaves, because the bonding and the identification we have gone through tell us that we became one.

We may disagree. We have disagreed, Chris, in many ways. As a matter of fact, when he became the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, I said he was treading on very dangerous ground, ground that maybe the party here had established. We hoped that he had not walked in any way to damage the kind of reputation and the cohesiveness we had put together in those establishments. However, as you leave, we understand that on the new grounds on which you go, you will carry that education and the fact that here was a great learning ground for you too.

As we know, politics is a learning curve, and it always has intrigue and of course opportunities and purposes. But as I said, it demands a lot from us. It demands commitment. Many times you have to be here—especially being a minister at a very early time. You came, and after just short of a year, you were a minister and taking on that role. I know what it is as you take that on. There are different dynamics altogether; the dynamics with your colleagues in your caucus and the dynamics with those in the opposition. Of course, we did not spare the child here when we took the rod out to tell you how we felt. You have handled it in a very dignified and graceful manner, and I want to thank you for that. You continue to give the decorum that the House deserves, and again, we want to thank you for that.

As I said, I may not always agree with you, Chris, but I understand the challenges you faced through those nine years. Your wife, Marie, your two sons, Clayton and Cody, and your two daughters, Charlotte and Caroline, of course are individuals who know a father. I remember once seeing you in the shopping plaza. I could not identify at all—it was the minister, Chris Hodgson, I saw. I saw the kids hanging around you, and I said, "That's the individual whom I know as an individual and a person."

I wish you luck in your future endeavours, and I'm sure you'll be successful. I look at you as more of a soccer player than a hockey player. I hope with that kind of team-playing you continue that role, not only in the endeavours you have in the future but also as you carry that great family tradition that you have carried on. We wish you all the best.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): First of all, on behalf of the New Democratic caucus and our leader, Howard Hampton, I want to wish you well, Chris, in your choice to leave this place. Now, the neat part about your exiting is that you got to pick it. As you know, in this business you're a very fortunate person if you get to choose your out in this particular walk of life that we

have chosen. After the next election, there's probably going to be a number of people who wish they had had that opportunity rather than being told they had to leave. But that's another story.

I go back to our time in government. Chris was elected in the by-election in Haliburton, if you remember, after Mr Dennis Drainville had decided to take his leave of this place, I guess some time in 1992-93. I remember you coming into the Legislature, Chris, at the time, a new guy elected in a by-election, full of vim and vigour, coming in here to do your job and to do your part as a member of your caucus, then the third party. What impressed me at the time that you came in—you may not remember this, but we sat on the legislative committee dealing with the Sustainable Forestry Development Act. I was actually very impressed that, as an opposition member, a new member first elected to this place, you picked up what the gist of that was all about very quickly, and I found out why. It was that you had a certain understanding of the woods industry, coming from Haliburton, and in fact had worked in that particular industry yourself over the years.

I just want to say to you that I remember, through that committee process, we did have our differences as far as where we wanted to go with the final outcome of the legislation, but I always got the sense, and this is a tribute to you, that you really were trying, from your own perspective, to do what you thought was right for northerners by way of that legislation. You never really came at that particular debate around sustainable forestry development from a partisan nature. You looked at it from a policy perspective and brought that forward.

Now, you were fortunate. You were re-elected in 1995. That probably attests to the work you did for that short time from the by-election up to the election. But also the sweep certainly helped, because I know it helped me in 1990 for sure. But I've got to say—and this is as a northerner saying this to a southerner, so I hope you take this as a really good compliment—when you were appointed Minister of Northern Development and Mines originally, if I remember correctly—I think it was your first ministry, am I correct? As minister? Yes—a lot of people in northern Ontario were going, "Well, here comes somebody from southern Ontario who's going to become our Minister of Northern Development and Mines. What does that person know about northern Ontario?" There was a lot of worry, and rightfully so, as Mr McDonald would know as a fellow northerner. When you've got somebody who's not from the north representing one of the key ministries in northern Ontario, there was a lot of concern on the part of a lot of people—I'm not just saying the opposition parties—and community leaders across the north. You, quite frankly, managed in very short order to impress a lot of people.

As I go around northern Ontario as our northern development critic, being from northern Ontario and knowing many people, I know that I speak on their behalf when I say they really enjoyed your time as Minister of Northern Development and Minister of Natural Resources. People really got the feeling from you that again, as you had while you were in opposition on sustainable

forestry development, while you were Minister of Northern Development and Minister of Natural Resources you really did give a darn about the north, tried to do what was right and always had time for the mayors, the councillors and whoever was walking through your door with an issue that dealt with northern Ontario.

1610

People may have been happy or unhappy about the results of meetings, and such is the case for any minister of any government, but at the end of the day nobody ever walked out your door saying, "I didn't get a fair hearing." I think it is really quite something—for any minister—that you managed to stay above the fray in what is in our day a very—we're not a divided Parliament, but we're certainly much more partisan than we were before. Everybody knew Chris Hodgson was a Conservative, everybody knew he was one of the key architects of the Common Sense Revolution, everybody knew he was loyal to his party. But you were never so partisan that people in northern Ontario, who by and large didn't vote Conservative, didn't feel that you tried to do what was right, and many times did.

On behalf of people from northwestern to northeastern Ontario, I want to thank you, as a northerner, for your time in Northern Development. You were there to listen to our concerns. You dealt with many of them. There are some issues that are unresolved, but that is the case for many governments. So I want to make sure you know that from the people in northern Ontario.

I want to say, however, this may not be our last goodbye because it could be that we have to do this tribute all over again in the fall, should there not be an election. So we're saying don't get too comfortable being gone. I am not convinced that event will happen as said.

I also want to say, in closing—I've touched on this a bit but I think it really needs to be said—that a number of people come to this Legislature sometimes with their politics on their sleeves and never see beyond the politics, from all parties. So this is not just a Conservative attribute; this is anybody who takes politics seriously. You're one of the few people, and there are few people in each caucus who have managed to do this, who have understood that you've got to be proud about who you are, but that at the end of the day you're here to serve all people no matter what your political party is. I consider you one of those people on the Conservative benches who has risen above partisan politics and has always remembered that you're here to serve all Ontarians, not just people of your provincial party.

On behalf of New Democrats, on behalf of northerners, we wish you well. We know that your family is going to be very happy to have you on a more full-time basis. Make sure that you look us up every now and then. We just thank you for your time in this Parliament. It was time well served.

The Acting Speaker: Now to the honourable member for Haliburton-Victoria-Brock for a few remarks.

Mr Chris Hodgson (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, and thank you to

Helen, Alvin and Gilles. I know that's not parliamentary, but I consider you friends and I really appreciate all the kind words you said about me. It's kind of embarrassing to be spoken about this way. I suppose I should have quit years ago if I'd known you were all going to think that way about me.

It has been an honour and a privilege to serve the people of my riding and it's been an opportunity of a lifetime. I would recommend it to anybody who has an interest in their community or their province, in making life a little better for their residents. It's been a great ride and I've enjoyed every minute of it.

It wasn't easy to decide not to pursue running again in the next election. I'll miss the campaign. But when your hair is turning grey and you're only in your early forties and you've got four kids, it's time to move on, and if I'm going to do other things in life, I feel this is the right time to it, right now.

You mentioned a number of the things here, and I've been humbled to hear that. I want to thank particularly the people of my town of Haliburton and my whole riding of Haliburton-Victoria-Brock. They've supported me in three general elections. They took a risk in electing a young person to represent them, and I've always been humbled by that and honoured to be a part of trying to make our area a better place to live. I think together we've improved life there: new hospitals, new schools, better roads, there are a number of investments that have taken place. You've got to understand that in rural Ontario the government has a more day-to-day impact on people's lives than it may appear on the evening news in some of the larger urban centres.

The MNR, for example, the ministry that I was first asked by Premier Harris to be the minister of, along with Northern Development and Mines—and Gilles is right; at the time there was a lot of scepticism about a southerner until they looked at the map and realized that there are a lot of things in Haliburton in common with northern Ontario, except for the provincial funding, which to my great regret I was never able to change.

That was the government in a lot of small towns across northern Ontario: the crown land and the forestry and all the issues and all the stakeholders who make their living from our land base, and that was a great learning experience and a great pleasure, actually; Management Board, working with the unions, I enjoyed that. We were able to find resolutions without having strikes, and I always thought that was because of the goodwill of the union leaders. In municipal affairs—that's where I came from. I first got involved at politics at the community level. I enjoyed working with municipal leaders. It's an honour to be the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

I got into politics through the municipal side, and it was non-partisan. In fact, the hardest challenge I had, even though my family—uncles and cousins—had been elected to this Legislature, and my grandfather had been a member in Ottawa for 18 years—we'd never grown up around partisan politics. My father was a director of education, and we weren't involved in the day-to-day

activities and the hurly-burly of partisan politics. So I remember the greatest challenge was the nomination, and later on during the by-election, when they were doing polling, it turned out that all my friends were Liberals. Eventually, I just said, "I don't care what you call yourself. As long as you're voting for me, that's fine." They've placed their faith in me for three elections. I will truly always be thankful for that.

I had a couple of perceptions about politics before I came here. Studying politics at university, you learn all the theory, how the political systems work and how government functions. Then you get elected. A lot of the things we learned were true, but there were two assumptions that you always have in the back of your mind that turned out to be totally false. The first was conspiracy theories, that somehow there's an organization that thinks ahead and plans out these things and has grand designs. As soon as you're elected, you realize we're not that well organized, so you dispel any notion of conspiracy theories existing in government.

The second was that if you're lucky and have a successful political career, you'll have the same friends you started with before you got elected. I found out, since I announced my resignation that is going to take place when the next election is called, that that's not true. I've made a lot of friends across Ontario who have phoned me and continued to send me cards, advice and encouragement, both outside of this Legislature and inside this Legislature. It has been a true honour and a privilege to serve with you, my cabinet and caucus colleagues, and members of the opposition. These are important roles that we fulfill in representing our residents. I've always found that it's been a pleasure to work with people who cared about their ridings, because ultimately you can't control all the big things. If you know how it's working in your riding and you look after the little things, the big things will look after themselves. I've always found it a pleasure to work with members in this House who cared about the people in their communities.

For that, I want to thank you and the people in my riding again; and you, Mr Speaker, thank you for giving me a few minutes to say a few words.

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): On a point of order, Mr Speaker, I have news for the honourable member from Victoria-Haliburton-Brock: this may well not be his last day in the Legislative Assembly. I hope you didn't take all those nice words to heart, Chris, because the House does reconvene on September 22. We'll be proceeding with the rest of our throne speech initiatives.

Having said that, in case Chris plans not to come back on September 22, it really has been an honour and a privilege for me to have worked with someone whom I regard as a true gentleman, a person whose integrity, as has been pointed out by some of the honourable members opposite, has never been questioned. There aren't that many members who are liked by virtually everybody in the Legislative Assembly, no matter their political party. I think it speaks to Chris's approach to public life that he

has never been full of himself, he has always looked for his constituents and he's always done the right thing, even when that was difficult politically to do. He has always spoken his mind, done the right thing and tried to achieve things by way of consensus as opposed to confrontation.

I can remember campaigning on Chris's behalf in his by-election when he first got elected. I can remember also the pain that he felt when one of his children recently had a difficult time physically. Chris, being the honourable individual that he is, put his family first, put his family above his career and did the right thing. I think if Chris Hodgson is remembered for anything in this place, in his riding and throughout the province of Ontario, it will be for being a representative who truly was a person of the utmost integrity, who always did the right thing, regardless of one's political allegiance, and was respected by all.

1620

Hon Mr Baird: I'm very pleased to have the occasion to talk about my colleague the member for Etobicoke North. As the Premier said, I, like he, am looking forward to coming back to the House in the fall, on September 22, but on a just-in-case basis I'm pleased to have the opportunity to rise on behalf of our Premier Ernie Eves and on behalf of the government caucus to talk about my friend John Hastings, the member for Etobicoke North.

The one thing I'll always take from John Hastings's time at Queen's Park is that he is a strong advocate for fiscal responsibility and common sense at Queen's Park. I think he brought that same approach to Etobicoke politics long before he arrived here. He detests wasteful bureaucracy and is a frequent reminder to all of us when we get into some bureaucratic battle of red tape, put in, of course, by politicians. We're very fortunate to have John as someone to remind us of that every day.

John has been a very strong advocate for his constituents. First and foremost, he's never afraid to stand up and fight for them and to fight to eliminate red tape for them. He has been a strong supporter of Big Brothers in his constituency. In fact, he has quite often hosted an annual Big Brothers' bowl-a-thon in Etobicoke. Pinball Clemens of the Argonauts, I understand, has been there a number of times. He has supported and has run in the Terry Fox Run, something I have never been able to do. I'm not an athlete.

Hon Mr Hudak: No.

Hon Mr Baird: I know that comes as a surprise to the Minister of Consumer and Business Services.

John has been a strong advocate and supporter of seniors in his riding. He has hosted numerous seniors' seminars, which have been attended by a good number of seniors from across his constituency. When you look at someone who takes an interest in the vulnerable, to me that says a terrific amount about this man's integrity and his capacity.

I had the opportunity to visit his riding once with him when I was Minister of Community and Social Services.

We visited a group called CHIRS in his riding. John attended and accompanied with me. They're a group who help people with disabilities. There was a program with Ontario Works where it was providing training and giving some experience to these people. When I attended that event with John in his constituency, he was well known to all in attendance because he's a member who's very much in touch with his riding.

John, like many members of this place, is a workaholic. He, like all of us—like many of us, not all of us—works around the clock, works evenings and weekends in support of his constituents in the northern part of Etobicoke. That's an approach he took when he was on city council and has continued. In this place, he's been a strong supporter of technology, the Internet, e-commerce and alternative energy. He has had a number of private members' bills on this and has certainly given us a lot of advice on alternative energy.

John has been a strong supporter of the William Osler Health Centre in his constituency of Etobicoke. As I think all members would agree, if it's not the economy, it's health care as far as the major issues of concern to people in our communities. John has been a big supporter of the William Osler Health Centre, which serves people in his part of the GTA. Of course there's some very good news going on with that centre right now that John has certainly been a contributor to.

John's riding is a diverse part of the province. It's perhaps one of the most diverse ridings in Ontario. It is not what I would call a natural Conservative seat. John has pulled off an upset win in two consecutive elections. He had the guts and the courage to put his name on the ballot back in 1995 when few people would have predicted a Conservative win as far as a government and probably fewer would have said he could have beaten a very popular incumbent in that riding, which was not a traditional Tory seat. But the local candidate can make the difference, and John not only made that difference in 1995 but surprised many folks in politics on all sides of the House by making the difference and returning to Queen's Park in 1999.

John goes door to door regularly to meet with his constituents. I think he knocked on just about every door in his two campaigns. Being in touch with his community is undoubtedly the reason he is held in such high esteem by his constituents.

We'll miss his contribution in our caucus, and we'll miss his contribution here at Queen's Park. We want to wish him all the very best as he enters a new part of his career. All the very best, John.

Mr Duncan: I'm pleased to be able to pay tribute to my friend from Etobicoke North, John Hastings, as his retirement approaches and it could conceivably be his last day in the House.

In preparing to say a few words—and I'm glad to have the opportunity—I reviewed his biography. The government House leader has certainly reviewed, John, a number of the tremendous commitments you've made in your community over the years. As I reviewed your

biography and looked at the various parliamentary assistant roles you've had, cabinet committees, committees of this Legislature, it reinforced what I think most of us on this side observed about you. I should tell you that all of us wanted the opportunity to do this, because it is probably the only time we can address that side of the House without you being one of the strongest voices shouting us back down. You are a man of great conviction; you have been. You have introduced a number of private member's bills, which, on review, inevitably are unique, inevitably are good ideas and inevitably bring something to the public debate that wasn't there previously.

Your career prior to coming here is a testament to somebody who has given of himself throughout his life, as a teacher, as a communications specialist with the WCB and in all your various activities. I think it's a reflection of the kind of man you are and the kind of conviction you've brought to your entire career, not just the years you've had here.

As the government House leader reflected, you were elected in 1995 and re-elected in 1999. You were one of those members, as I was, who found themselves virtually running in a new seat after the redistribution, and that is inevitably a challenge. You met that challenge head-on and served your party and your constituents well in that election and in your years of service here.

I spoke with John Gerretsen, the Chair of public accounts, and he told me that throughout the last eight years you have probably been one of the most diligent members of that committee and, as the government House leader said, always concerned about fiscal probity on the part of government in politics and in the Legislature. You are a man whose views are very strong and very well defended. Though from time to time we differ, it's a mark of your integrity and a mark of your firm conviction that you have never wavered in those views and you have defended them in committee, in bills you've introduced here, in your statements in the House and in your work in the community.

I think it's a tribute that your greatest activities, as the government House leader outlined, have been in your community. Sponsoring athletic teams, the fundraising events you've done, your activities in Rotary and the Kinsmen are all activities that speak of somebody of enormous character, somebody who truly cares about the people and the society around him.

As is often the case in this place, we don't get a chance to get to know one another as well as we might like to. I've had the opportunity to serve on committee on several occasions with John. I think you were down in Windsor with the alternative fuels committee. We were in Dearborn together, and we had the chance to sit together on the bus, as I recall, and talk at great length. My recollection of that was the knowledge that you brought to those discussions at that time on the issues you were researching and your depth of conviction on that particular issue.

On behalf of the official opposition, John, and on behalf of the people of the province, we thank you for

your service, for your integrity, for your character, for what you have done for the people you represent, for your contribution to the government in which you serve, the party which you served, for the integrity that you've brought to your office and the decency that you've brought to this Legislature.

As we wish all, we wish you, sir, well in your future endeavours. No doubt you will find other challenges to occupy your time. You have hopefully good health and many years ahead of you to pursue those challenges, and we on this side, on behalf of Dalton McGuinty, the leader of our party, the Ontario Liberal Party, wish you the very, very best in all future endeavours.

1630

The Acting Speaker: Now the deputy leader of the third party.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I'm pleased to say that I'm making John smile. That's nice. I feel privileged to represent our caucus, the NDP caucus, and Howard Hampton to wish John Hastings all the very best in the future.

We don't get to know each other very well outside of this place. A lot of us have seen John scowl from time to time and throw books down angrily and stalk out, which is something that my caucus is familiar with my doing from time to time. I can't tell you how many times I've walked out slamming doors and throwing books around, so I can relate to that.

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): Are you related?

Ms Churley: No.

But I do want to say that one of the first things that impressed me about John was that after he defeated Ed Philip, who of course had been a member of the NDP for about 20 years—and that was a devastating time for us, when we lost the election in 1995. We weren't surprised, but we thought we were going to win that seat. I think John won by about 900 votes. But I was very impressed, and I got the clipping of this today, by the gracious words that Mr Hastings said at that time about Ed Philip. Not everybody did that at the time; people just got out and bragged about having won and beaten the NDP, the dastardly socialists, and how they were going to change the world.

But here's what John said about Ed Philip at the time: "It's a pretty significant event when you defeat someone of Ed Philip's calibre," adding that, "he served his riding with distinction, and he is to be congratulated for all the good work he's done." I thank you for that, John, because I thought that was a very gracious response to having defeated somebody, and I expect you understood that he must have gone through a very difficult time when he lost that election.

I have had the privilege of getting to know John outside of this place. I've served on a committee with him, the select committee on alternative fuels, which was a rare committee around here. Although the Tories had the majority, as on all committees, this was a committee where, although compromises were made at the end of

the day like the closing of the gas-fired plants in 2015 and a few other things, we worked really hard in a non-partisan way to make that committee work and to come up with recommendations for the benefit of all the people of Ontario. John was an enthusiastic, hard-working member of that committee who came every day with his piles of paper, having clearly done the research. I learned some things from him, and I will admit that. I'm not a total expert in this field, and John was very knowledgeable and brought some very good ideas to the committee.

I also got to know John when I was sitting in your seat, Mr Speaker. Those weren't the happiest days. Mr Hastings then sat way, way up there in that corner, and it was my responsibility during petitions to try to pick out of every caucus which member would get to stand up and read their petitions. I'm sure you'd remember this, John. Now, John was way up there, and then there would be people like John O'Toole, who would be taking \$5 bills out of his pocket and flashing them: "Pick me. Pick me." Of course, I never succumbed to that. But John sometimes quite truthfully would get missed up there, and he would be very angry with me from time to time. He's nodding his head that that's true. But we survived those difficult days. We had a few difficult exchanges. I'm sure the table officers remember that.

But the third opportunity I had to get to know John was in Newfoundland. It's the only taxpayer junket that I've taken for a long time, to St John's, Newfoundland. As you well know, that's my birthplace. I grew up in Labrador, and I was delighted to go back to Newfoundland to replace Shelley Martel, who couldn't go, on the accounts committee. I hadn't known this, and I'll bet members in the Legislature do not know this, but John is an art collector. I was delighted to be able to show John around St John's and show him the art galleries. I know he went around and contributed to the economy of Newfoundland, for which we were very thankful.

One last thing I want to say: I had been told that John is in fact one of the fiercest independent voices on the public accounts committee, that he stands up for the people of Ontario and that he often speaks out against his own government if he feels it's necessary in that committee.

Those are some of the things I want to share about Mr Hastings, whom many of us have not had the opportunity, as I have, to get to know. I certainly want to wish you all the best, John, in your future. Good luck to you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. And now the honourable member for Etobicoke North for a few remarks.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): Merci, Monsieur le Président. That's about my only French except for "excellent," for trying to learn some French while I was here.

First off, let me say that I would like to accept the appreciation and the remarks and the gratitude of members opposite and of colleagues in my own caucus and thank them for pointing out some of the things I have tried to do in the last number of years.

This, as the member for Victoria-Haliburton-Brock said, has been quite a ride. I think the first time I decided I would make a run for public office was in September or October 1985, when I ran for the hydro commission, which despite its low order in the food chain in terms of its significance back then seems to have created a tremendously important role in today's Ontario economy, if not the world. I can remember going door to door in an area that was predominantly NDP. You had to run city-wide. I think I ran my first campaign on about \$1,200. We were able to create the illusion in our small group that I was in the south and the north and all over when in fact there were huge gaps, if you looked at a map, where we had never got to. But we had some decent publicity.

I think the other reason I was fortunate in winning was that we had so many candidates running. There were about 12 or 13. I came in second in a group of 11 or 12 candidates, and we won by a landslide—this would be a good experience for the member from Nipissing to know—of about 21 votes; no, 42 votes out of 21,000 cast between number one and three. Then there was this huge distribution throughout that time. We ended up in the courts down here because there was a dispute in terms of my colleague from Etobicoke-Lakeshore and my colleague from Etobicoke Centre back in those days, both of whom had run for board of control, and Ms Jones, who is about to run against Mr Kells in the upcoming election, whenever it occurs. We ended up having a court order because everybody who had been under 200 votes ended up having to present their case as to why the vote was the way it was. There was a certified recount involving my position. That was my introduction to public office.

Then in 1988, when the council of that day decided to split two five-member voting districts into 12 single districts, I decided I'd take a chance on running for Etobicoke council in the far north end of that city, and we were successful, thanks to the people.

So at the outset I would like to thank the people of Etobicoke North, for whom I have had the direct distinction and honour to serve in my modest capacity over the last number of years. It has been a difficult challenge because I am only single-language trying to become "deux langues," but I'm not doing very well. Then there are about 80 other new groups in the country. This is truly a diverse community. I have made an attempt to represent them and to show them the Conservative way, if you will, in terms of these issues. That's been a dramatic story in itself.

1640

As for being here, I have enjoyed being able to present private members' bills on education, technology, energy and science. I think, as the previous speaker has said, I'm very interested in that area because I believe, perhaps naïvely in a sense, in the value and the hope for humanity of the potentiality of technology, whether it's through the Internet or through alternative fuels or what have you. I don't want to get too pessimistic in my remarks here, but I strongly urge members who are coming back here that this Legislative Assembly needs to look at updating itself in terms of the use of technology, in terms of the 21st

century. While I don't want to say, "Let's throw out tradition," I don't think that by invoking an electronic voting system you're doing that. You would be not a leader, unfortunately, but a follower in this whole area. I think it's one of the major things that needs to be done to connect with the outside world. That's my perception.

Unfortunately, my sense is, and it's no direct reflection on any of you, that this place has a certain irrelevancy in modern-day life. I don't want to take away from anybody's hard work, but I think all of us need to look at how effective and relevant we are as a group, as parties, as members of a Legislative Assembly in terms of reflecting the views of the people, and how we impact the lives of those people. If you talk to young people today, aside from the folks who are serving here as pages, there are very few people who understand the political process and all its intricacies. I think we need to be doing more with the use of technology. It is not the only solution, of course. The potential of the human condition is the key; technology is only a way of reconnecting to the world.

I would also like to comment briefly on the whole aspect of democratic politics in this province and in Canada. In my personal estimation, when people ask you, "Why are you leaving?" I am less than enchanted with what I see occurring in this House sometimes, and I have been a part of it: I am the first to admit that the poisoned well of partisanship, in a sense, prevents members here from reaching some pretty needed solutions to a whole set of issues. I think that's unfortunate. Whoever is responsible, I think it denigrates the political dignity of this assembly and of the political process in the province of Ontario and in Canada.

I don't want to overstate this issue, but I fundamentally believe that there may be a little bit of a parliamentary crisis facing this institution and other places; if we don't find ways of enhancing the independent role, the representative role, the democratic role of the legislative member. It's not just in Canada; it's throughout the world. Democracy can't be a shell. It has to have substance to it. In my estimation, in the experiences I've had here, working in committees is the way to go, whether it's a select committee on alternative fuels or a standing committee. Committees, to me, are the model. Certainly, we have partisanship, and we're not going to eliminate it, but we need to moderate it, ladies and gentlemen, if we're going to attract new people in government in the next generation, in the 21st century.

With those few remarks, I would like to thank you for the companionship, the fellowship, the associations which I have formed in this Legislative Assembly of Ontario. I thank you for your support, your encouragement and I wish all of you well in the upcoming election, whenever the Premier decides that comes.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Speaker, I beg your indulgence to say a few words about the member from Hamilton West.

The Acting Speaker: I would just remind the member that he must be telling the truth and the absolute truth only; with that, you may certainly have the floor.

Mr Hampton: I would have thought, Speaker, that in some cases you would not have wanted me to tell the truth.

To all the members of the Legislature, it is my pleasure to say a few words about the career here of the member from Hamilton West, who is now, as we speak, our Speaker for the afternoon, but who came here first as the member for Hamilton Centre.

I must tell you, I did not know Dave Christopherson before the evening of September 6, 1990. For many of us, that was a very memorable occasion. For those of us who were here before 1990, we remember going into the election and the Peterson government was at 53% in the polls the day the election was called. Earlier that spring David Peterson had been identified by the Toronto Star, no less, as the most popular Premier possibly the province had ever had. So many of us went into the 1990 election thinking, "Well, a few of us will survive." Now we all know what happened in that election. There was a total reversal of fortunes. I know some of my Liberal colleagues still feel bad about that. They still are rather upset about that.

But Dave Christopherson the member then for Hamilton Centre and now Hamilton West was elected. He took on someone who had been a very popular cabinet minister from Hamilton; in fact, a Liberal cabinet minister who had a long association with the Liberal Party and a long association with some very powerful figures in the Liberal Party. All of us were quite impressed that this new member of the NDP caucus had been elected quite unexpectedly and in effect had taken out a very well known and popular Liberal cabinet minister.

I have to tell you—Mr Kormos will appreciate this—about the first time I met Dave Christopherson. Shortly following September 6, there was a dinner planned for all of the new members at a place on Avenue Road, I think it was called the Bradgate Arms in those days. I was sitting at a table and the new member for Hamilton Centre was walking in and introducing himself to all the members. He walked over and sat down at my table, looked at my name tag and said, "Oh, you're Howard Hampton. I'm Dave Christopherson from Hamilton Centre." Then Mr Kormos walked over and sat down at the other table and Mr Christopherson—I don't know if he remembers this—said to me, "I've got to go say hello to Peter Kormos. Later on this week he's going to be sworn in as the Attorney General for Ontario." Later on that week, I was sworn in as the Attorney General for Ontario. I didn't have the heart to tell him at the time that his intelligence was wrong.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Oh, so wrong.
1650

Mr Hampton: That was the first time that I met the member for Hamilton Centre. He quickly established himself in our caucus. In fact, he was very soon elected the chair of our caucus and, after being a very effective chair of our caucus, he was then welcomed into cabinet as Solicitor General. Those people who have worked in

the Solicitor General portfolio, or what is now called the Minister of Public Safety and Security, will know that this is one of the cabinet jobs that most of us don't want to have, frankly, because you can do everything right and still find yourself being pilloried in the press. Or you can have a very effective agenda and then suddenly something will happen out there in the world of policing which will totally upset your effective agenda and put you in a very different setting.

Dave Christopherson became Solicitor General of the province at a time when, I think it's fair to say, the relations between the NDP government of the day and the police services of the province were not the best relationships; some would say they were strained relationships. I think the reason that Dave Christopherson was put in as Solicitor General is that Premier Bob Rae felt that he had the experience, the knowledge, the capacity to do something to improve that relationship. In fact, in very short order Dave Christopherson did a number of things which improved that relationship. I would say that within a year we actually had police services across the province saying, "Boy, I really like the new Solicitor General. I like the positions he takes. I like the fact that his door is open. I like the fact that he works with us. I like the fact that he has taken a number of our issues forward."

Mr Christopherson was also Solicitor General—and I think the Conservative members will appreciate this—at a time when the Conservative Minister of Justice federally brought forward gun control legislation. In effect, this was gun control legislation dealing—surprise, surprise—not just with handguns but with what we would ordinarily call rifles, .22s—

Interjection.

Mr Hampton: Shotguns, long guns, yes. So Mr Christopherson had to work through, shall we say, that delicate enterprise as well and did a very effective job of doing that.

I'm going to relate another story that only the member for Hamilton West and I have actually shared. I don't know that he's ever talked to anybody about this or that I've talked about this. Following the unforgettable election of June 8, 1995, Bob Rae stepped down as leader of the New Democratic Party and then there was a lot of discussion among the MPPs, the band of 17 of us after Bob Rae stepped down, as to who was going to run for the leadership. The member for Hamilton Centre, now Hamilton West, thought long and hard about running for the leadership. So it actually did happen that—I think it was late at night—the member for Hamilton Centre and myself sat down for a tête-à-tête about who was going to run for the leadership and what we thought our prospects were, because we were both at the time thinking about entering the race.

I often, to this day, have thought about how that leadership race may have played out differently if the member for Hamilton West had entered the leadership race, because he would have been a formidable candidate. I think all of us who have served with him

here in the Legislature know that he would have been a very formidable candidate. But, for whatever reason at the time, he decided not to run, and that was probably the single event in my leadership aspirations which helped me, because I think he and I both recognized that we would likely be talking to relatively the same audience and appealing to the same people or very similar people across the province.

I have never had an opportunity to thank him, although I suspect that my spouse would never thank him for this. I've never really had an opportunity to thank him appropriately for the decision he made at that time, because I believe that was the single largest contribution to the leadership aspirations I had.

I suspect that all of us here know that the member for Hamilton West is a very effective parliamentarian. In his work as Deputy Speaker he has proven to be quite good in terms of his understanding of the rules and in terms of always being alert and observant as to what is going on in the House and how those rules should be interpreted and applied from day to day.

In his role as a parliamentary spokesperson he is eloquent, articulate, passionate and always effective. I would argue that anyone who has ever ventured into his constituencies—either Hamilton Centre or now Hamilton West—will know that he has been a very effective constituency member and that very little happens in the city of Hamilton without Mr Christopherson knowing exactly what's going on and how that will play politically, whether it be municipally, provincially or federally.

He has been a credit to all of us. He has performed well as a legislator and as a constituency representative and he has been a very effective Deputy Speaker.

Now, as everyone knows, he is about to enter another electoral campaign to become the mayor of Hamilton. I must say that I don't know what it is about elected members from Hamilton—I don't know if it's something in the air or something they put in the water—but virtually every elected member I have known who has come from Hamilton has had aspirations at one time or another to return to Hamilton to be mayor of that fair city.

I can remember as a student being in this Legislature 30 years ago when Ian Deans was the NDP House leader. He was Stephen Lewis's right-hand person. Ian Deans would get on his feet and he would wax eloquent for hours about Hamilton. Those of us who knew Ian Deans privately know that he always had the aspiration to return to Hamilton and run for mayor.

So I don't know if it's something they put in the water or if it's something they breathe in the air, but members from Hamilton are extremely dedicated to their city, to the institutions of their city and to the people who come from Hamilton.

I know I can say on behalf of all the members of our caucus and, I suspect, all the members here that while we will miss the member for Hamilton West, while we will certainly miss his booming voice, and while members of the government may not miss his capacity for incisive questioning, shall we say, if not the very tough supple-

mentary question, we all acknowledge his ability and his contribution.

I recognize that there's a certain danger when you are in fact elected before someone and you're going to be here after them. I think it is sometimes passing strange when you're here, then you see someone elected, and then you see them return to another kind of life while you're still here, continuing on in the work. It's a bit of a different perspective.

I want to say this personally to the member for Hamilton West: we have appreciated your contribution as a member of the Legislature, as a member of cabinet, as a Deputy Speaker, and most of all we have appreciated your contribution to the caucus.

As I say—I think I speak for all of us—we wish you well in your next undertaking to become the mayor of Hamilton. We wish you well. We will miss you but we wish you well. Thank you for a job well done.

1700

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much.

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I am very honoured to have the opportunity to help pay tribute to David Christopherson for his extraordinary service in the Ontario Legislature.

For 13 years now, I've been saying that Dave's an unrepentant, unreconstructed socialist, but now that he's leaving and won't be around this chamber any more, I think it's time to admit there's much more to Dave than his ideology. As we pay tribute to Dave, what stands out most throughout his extraordinary political career is his love of Hamilton and his extraordinary passion and commitment to his constituents and the issues that matter to them. Among other things, Dave stood for the safety of guards in prison, for injured workers, for the integrity of the family support plan, and for not turning a blind eye to the death of a homeless man. Dave stood up for these issues in a way that enabled his compassion to serve the needs of others, and he did so in a highly effective manner.

Aside from the issues he brought forward, there are many milestones that mark Dave's long public career. He first became politically active when he was elected for two terms as president of the United Auto Workers Local 525. He then went on to represent his community as an outspoken alderman and regional councillor, from 1985 to 1990. He then brought his fight for working families to the provincial level when he was elected in 1990 as the MPP for Hamilton Centre.

In government, David served as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance and was elected chair of the NDP caucus. Then in September 1993, at the age of 37, he was appointed to his first cabinet position, as Minister of Correctional Services. Five months later he was appointed Ontario's Solicitor General, where he oversaw the merger of both these ministries into the single largest provincial ministry in Canada, with more than 15,000 employees.

While he was Solicitor General, he set partisan considerations aside to support my private member's bill,

while I was in opposition, to allow volunteer firefighters to use flashing green lights on their personal vehicles while travelling to and from emergencies, and Mr Speaker, I again express my appreciation for your support on that issue.

At the cabinet table, Dave lobbied for Hamilton at every opportunity. Bayfront Park, the GO station and the courthouse are just a few of the major initiatives Dave fought for and helped to bring to Hamilton.

In 1995, Dave rose to the new challenge of opposition, not a role he had sought or desired, but what the electorate had decided, serving as House leader and labour critic. During his years in opposition Dave has earned a reputation as one of the most skilled and passionate orators in the Legislature, and he's a tireless fighter for working families, as we all know. In 1999, Dave was re-elected as MPP for Hamilton West, and since that time has played an important role as finance critic and as the Deputy Speaker of the House, where he has earned the respect of members on all sides of the House.

I believe Dave has earned this respect because of the kind of man he is. His inner conviction is as solid as the steel that is forged at Stelco or Dofasco in his home city of Hamilton.

His life experience has given him an extraordinary education. I'm not surprised by how well he's advanced in public service, because I know him to be someone who learns from experience and forges his own progress by confronting issues directly with a mind I would liken to a steel trap. He is in fact one of the smartest members in the Legislature, and those doing the public's business with him will likely tell you that he's as fearless as he is smart.

In the 13 years I've had the privilege of working with Dave, I can also say that he has an exceptional amount of energy, the positive kind, that not only keeps him going strong but helps to make the Legislature a more civil and better place. I think Dave illustrated quite aptly how he stays positive in a quotation I found in an article recently written by Ian Urquhart of the *Toronto Star*. Dave clearly explained one of the fundamental tenets of politics when he said, "Credibility is the currency of politics ... and you earn credibility one day at a time, not one magical issue at a time."

He understands this definition full well because he has lived it here in this House. Sure proof of his own credibility is found in his electoral record at the municipal level and in three successful elections as MPP here at Queen's Park. The fact that he held on through the 1995 and 1999 elections, when it was perhaps not as easy to be an NDP candidate as perhaps it was in 1990, speaks volumes about the kind of MPP he has been.

In my 13 years here, I think I've only crossed swords with Dave once. That's fairly good, considering how adversarial this place is. Now that he's leaving us, I'm prepared to concede that I don't recall coming out on the winning end of that argument.

Most of our time, I think Dave will agree, has been spent as colleagues working constructively and, in fact,

working as friends. I think back to the committees we've served on together. Most recently—actually last winter—we spent a considerable amount of time on the standing committee on finance and economic affairs, which toured the province last February to conduct hearings on our budget. We travelled to London, Sudbury, Thunder Bay and Ottawa. We travelled at night after long days of hearings, and we always sat beside each other on either side of the aisle of this tiny passenger plane, up front right behind the pilots. When we weren't reviewing the instrumentation and one-upping each other on who would best take over in the event of the incapacitation of the pilots, we talked about the world of politics.

As I speak to members today about my friendship with Dave, I'm reminded of what I hear from MPPs who have served here in previous generations and in previous Parliaments. They tell me there was a time when most members respected the wishes of the electors by respecting the MPPs who had been sent here, when more friendships crossed party lines because of that respect and when this House was, quite frankly, a much more civilized and friendly place.

I'm saddened, in a way, that we as members might lose some civility with Dave's departure. But we should be optimistic in knowing that his goodwill will carry on. For on June 17, Dave made it official that he's running to be elected mayor of the city of Hamilton. I expect this will give him an excellent chance to continue to make a strong and positive contribution through his public service.

On behalf of the government caucus, Dave, I wish you all the best in that challenge and look forward to the time when our paths, if not our swords, will cross again in the near future.

I know that Dave will be well supported and motivated always by the love of his daughter and the light of his life, Kayla, who is 11 years old, I understand. I'd also like to take this chance to wish Kayla and Dave's partner, Denise, the very best. My fondest regards go out to them as they continue to support you, Dave, and guide you in your life's journey.

Thank you, Dave, for the kind of person you are and for all you've done, and from the Conservative caucus, congratulations to you on a job well done for the road ahead.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): Certainly on behalf of my leader, Dalton McGuinty, and all my colleagues, it's my honour to spend a few minutes talking about the leaving from Queen's Park of someone I consider not only a colleague but a close friend, someone I've had the opportunity of knowing and working with over a number of years, both here and on Hamilton city council.

Dave got elected to city council in 1985, and I got elected in 1987. One thing that's been consistent, though, is Dave's hairstyle, which has not changed since 1985. Mine, because of aging and the loss of hair, has had to change without any choice, but Dave's has not. Certainly

other things have not changed since 1985: his integrity, his values and the principles he stands for and fights for.

I remember the thing that stood out the most in the time I spent with Dave on council—the three years between 1987 and 1990, before he went to Queen's Park—was his true, fundamental belief in the causes he fought for. I remember he quietly took on championing the cause and fighting on behalf of people with mental illness—people who had been forgotten in our community—and dealing with cleaning up second level lodging homes and making life for people who are disabled or suffering from mental illness much better in the city of Hamilton. Dave had a personal commitment to seeing that happen. He fought many of those causes quietly, without any political fanfare, knowing there was no real political win in the sense of votes, in those types of issues, but it was the right thing to do.

I remember when the massacre at Tiananmen Square occurred, Dave took the lead on city council in bringing forward across this country a reaction and a response to the brutal massacre and murder of those students; again, not a very political win, but it was the right thing to do.

When Dave chose to run for the Legislature in Hamilton Centre, I happened to be running the campaign for the Liberal candidate, the cabinet minister who Dave defeated, Lily Oddie-Munro. I remember we met the day the writ was issued, shook hands on a street corner and said, "Let's go out, let's keep it clean and let's keep it above board." Dave did that and won quite handily at that time.

1710

As members know—and Speaker, I'm sure you know—Hamilton politics are different, I think, as many other communities are. When it comes to the election campaign with the NDP, it's trench warfare, it's guerrilla warfare. It's step on their head, step on their neck and keep them down as long as you can. And they feel the same way about ours. But when that writ period is over and the electorate has spoken, we come together as a community and we come together as members from all sides of the House, and Dave has done that extremely well. As a cabinet minister, he delivered for Hamilton. He often was at odds with his cabinet and spoke out on behalf of the community, and we are very grateful. Many of the things we have in Hamilton today—the waterfront has been talked about, the court house, the GO station—have been because of the leadership of David Christopherson. He brought that forward. As a member of council at that time, I fundamentally disagreed with much of what the NDP was doing across Ontario, but I can tell you that I agreed very strongly and give a great deal of credit to David Christopherson in his work and role that he brought forward on behalf of the people of Hamilton. Certainly, he was a fighter. He has been a fighter for our city, but certainly as a cabinet minister he delivered tremendously for the city of Hamilton.

I remember in 1999, with the boundary changes, part of my riding was part of Dave's riding and there was going to be the potential for a crossover and a clash. I

think we both made the right decision to run in opposite directions and away from each other. We were both fortunate enough to survive and be back here. I know that the people of Hamilton West have been extremely well-served by Dave, by his integrity, by his compassion and by the principles that he has held.

He had to make some tough decisions. Mr Hampton talked about the relationship of police officers, where Dave, as a cabinet minister—actually, at a time when police officers were not armed with the technology to the extent that they should be, Dave brought that forward. Dave, I think, created a great deal of credibility within the policing community for understanding that they needed that.

I remember an incident that talks to the integrity of David. There was an issue where one of his staffers had somehow overstepped the boundary in the role that they were playing and it was raised as an issue in the House. This staffer was a close personal friend and a confidant to Dave, but he did the right thing. He showed integrity, courage and leadership as a minister and immediately moved, dismissed that staff, with much regret, but certainly did what he believed was the right thing. That is the type of integrity that he brought as a cabinet minister.

As he moves on to the next phase, running for mayor, I am absolutely delighted to be able to support David in his endeavour. I believe he will be the next mayor of Hamilton. I think he's going to bring the same type of commitment, passion and principled value to our great city as he has to this Legislature. We're going to miss you, Dave. I'm certainly going to miss your guidance and friendship. I'll look forward to working with you in the next phase of your career, of your life, as the mayor of Hamilton. I know that the city of Hamilton has been blessed through your contribution as a city councillor and as an MPP, and I know the city of Hamilton is going to continue to be blessed through your contribution as the next mayor.

Good luck, best wishes. We're there with you, Dave, and I look forward to continuing working with you in your capacity as the next mayor of Hamilton.

The Acting Speaker: Watch what you wish for. It occurred to me, when Marilyn Churley mentioned earlier, "You know, Dave, given where you are and the way the afternoon's going to unfold, you've got the floor. You could filibuster for as long as you want." Of course, now it doesn't do me any good, so I'll have to pass on that opportunity.

The first thing I want to do, obviously, is to thank the leader of my party, the member for Waterloo-Wellington, and the member for Hamilton East for their comments. I'll speak to those very directly in a moment. I want to say to every member that if you're like me, you've often given thought to this moment. Are you one of the lucky ones, as Peter Kormos talked about earlier, to have two tributes, one where you're actually around to hear it—or not—and if it were the case that you could, what on earth would you say?

I've got to tell you that I've given up, as I've thought about this the last couple of days, trying to reach for the

words that are appropriate to the circumstance, to this place, and to the way I feel about this place and the way I feel about each and every one of you. So I'm just going to talk straight out on a number of things.

I'll try not to be too long, but I do want to take an opportunity, first of all, to thank my leader, Howard Hampton. Your remarks mean a great deal to me, Howard. All of us in our caucus, as some of you have lived through who are veterans, have been through some of the best times you can have as a politician and we've been through some of the toughest. Like any family, we've had our feuds and we've stood together against the challenges. When it felt like the entire world was coming at us, we just linked arms and stood there united in what we believe and why we came here. All of that, I want to tell you, means nothing. All that really matters is the good times and the strength and the absolute honour of sharing so much of my life, my political life and my personal life, with people of the calibre of my colleagues in the NDP caucus.

I have taken note and it meant a lot to me that every one of you arranged your schedule so that you could be here for what otherwise is really not that big a deal in the scheme of things, but it means an awful lot to me. I thank each and every one of you for this moment today and every moment that's been there for 13 years.

I might also point out that my leader, Howard Hampton, was so appreciative of the fact that I didn't run and the fact that I actually stood with him—I think I was one of the first MPPs, at least the surprise MPP to stand with him when he announced—that he rewarded me with the wonderful job of continuing to be the labour critic, added on finance critic and WCB and then said, "Now you can go be the House leader and go negotiate our party status back." That was his way of thanking me for that. But I thank him again, and I think he knows how much his words today have meant to me.

I think one of the most important things that can happen during this moment, for any of you who also go through it, is to have an opposition member, in this case a member of the government, stand up and say things that—by and large, I was listening to carefully and I didn't hear any outright lies.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: No. Very seriously, I want to thank you. You obviously took an awful lot of time. I know you phoned around to research some of your remarks. You took the time to lay them out, which is very consistent with the kind of member you are. It's been a pleasure to be a parliamentarian with you, a colleague but, most importantly, a friend. Your remarks came from the heart and they were received in the heart, and I thank you, Ted, for what you said today.

To my friend Dominic Agostino from Hamilton East, speaking on behalf of the official opposition, the Liberal caucus, I thank you, Dom. Given the fact that we're from two different parties, we've probably had one of the closest political relationships, given that both of us have very similar backgrounds in terms of why we're here and what motivates us.

Some have argued that Dominic is just a left-wing-enough Liberal and I'm a right-wing-enough New Democrat that maybe there's not that much gap in between. But what really matters is that at the end of the day, whether it's Brad Clark as a current Tory minister, Dominic Agostino or Marie Bountrogianni, Ted McMeekin or those who came before, it is true that we have a good tradition, a proud tradition and it's one that I hope my successor and any other new MPP follows, and that is, when you're so close to the city of Toronto, it's easy to feel like you're getting forgotten because you're in that shadow and the rest of the province ignores you. Anyway, the point is that the only way Hamilton can really be properly served is when the MPPs unite together, set aside their partisan membership cards, and act on behalf of the collective community.

I appreciate Dominic reflecting on that. It's an important part of our relationship, and it's an important part of what it is to be a Hamilton MPP. I thank you for all your words, and I appreciate very much your support in my current endeavours. I only want to say that for a number of people who are endorsing me, there's at least one, maybe two issues, but one in particular, that gives them a lot of static, a lot of grief. I'm fully aware of that and sensitive to that. The fact that you're prepared to take that kind of heat, if you will, from people who disagree with me on a position and look beyond that and try to see what I have to offer means a lot, and I thank you and Marie both, who have gone out on a limb like that.

I wish you the very best in your continued career, Dominic, and I know you've got a major contribution left to make here and in the city of Hamilton.

1720

I'm realizing now that I'm already getting—surprise, surprise—a little long-winded. I'll try not to comment on everything I was going to. But the first thing, beyond commenting on the remarks of those who took the time today: I want to thank, as all of you would, and do when you get an opportunity, the constituents who elected me here for three elections, the people of Hamilton Centre and now Hamilton West, who placed their trust in me many times when it wasn't expected. Against odds, against demographics they still took a chance. To all those constituents of mine who have shown that support, let me say thank you. It has been such an honour to serve in this place. I could only do the best I can. One can never do the absolute job that our constituents are entitled to, we can only do our best, and I've tried to do that. I thank you for your ongoing support, to the people in Hamilton.

I want to also make a quick comment on Gary Carr: I want to acknowledge his remarks. For the last little while he's not only been a friend and a colleague but in some ways my boss. We don't usually, as MPPs, take kindly to having bosses, because we don't see ourselves that way, but I am so proud to have been associated with the term of the speakership of Gary Carr. Gary and I go back to the very first day when I was elected. We came here for the new member orientation. I don't know if they still do it. Do they have the new member orientation breakfast?

Mr AL McDonald (Nipissing): No.

The Acting Speaker: AL, they wouldn't with you; there was only one.

They used to put that on at the end of every election. If they don't, they should start it again. It was a great opportunity to get to know other members, to learn about being a parliamentarian without partisanship being the priority. At my table were Gary and Teresa Carr. From that moment forward, up to and including last Tuesday, when Gary was good enough to come down the highway and be there for my recent announcement, I've considered Gary to be the epitome of a parliamentarian. I think his speakership will go down in history as one of the finest. I consider him a very, very close friend and I thank him for everything that he's done.

A couple of quick stories, if I can. I have to tell these.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Well, it's taken 13 years, so a couple of minutes.

I remember the first time I took my seat in the Legislature as a new MPP, we had a huge caucus of 74 members. Most of us were rookies, as my leader has pointed out, and we came in for sort of a mock day to get used to it. I deliberately stood through the whole thing and didn't take a seat because that wasn't the real moment. I waited until we actually came in. I believe the throne speech was the first time I actually formally took my seat. I'm sure many of you can recall now, at this exact moment, what it was like as you took your places for the first time in this chamber. The emotions are hard to put to words, I want to say, particularly for somebody who never, ever in a million years expected to be in a place like this. A high school dropout from the streets of Hamilton doesn't normally plan to be taking a seat in the Ontario Legislature, and yet that was where I found myself at that moment. The honour that I felt, as you all do, is just incredible, and as I think back on it now I can still recall vividly the sharpness of that emotion and the honour overwhelming me, the trust that people had given me to come to this historic place where such giants in our community have spoken and spent their political careers.

I want to talk about my first speech, only because I didn't say anything that was of any particular note and I regret that. I wish I had spent a little more time. What's important to me about that moment was more the fact that I was sitting about where Steve is now. As a new member—Marilyn Churley was my seatmate—I delivered this speech that absolutely nobody paid any attention to except for my mother, perhaps. It was a new government; it was history in the making, this huge new NDP government. There was nobody paying any attention to this backbencher from Hamilton. So I did my speech, and all I really wanted to do was get through it without collapsing out of nervousness or from the pressure of what it means to have a seat in the Legislature and stand up for the first time and give voice to that privilege. It went fine. I sat down, and that was that. And then around the corner here came the Honourable Bob Nixon, who at that time was the interim leader of the official opposition, the Liberals. There were lots of things

going on on the floor. Again, I was just sitting there pretty much by myself, collecting my papers. I caught him out of the corner of my eye and I watched him come across the floor, stop in the middle and bow to the Speaker. He came over, stuck his hand out, shook my hand and said, "I just heard your first speech in the House. I saw a little bit of it when I was in the House, but then I had to go into the lobby and I caught the rest of it on TV." I now know what that really means, but the fact of the matter is—members will understand that inside joke—he came over, and it was more the fact that he came over and said nice things—more than what the speech deserved—that made that moment special.

That was 13 years ago and I still remember how honoured I felt that somebody of that historical significance—I mean, he was a huge personality in this place at that time. There was just an aura around Bob Nixon, one of the great speakers, by the way. What a great opportunity for rookies to listen to people talk about the history of this place, much like listening to Sean Conway, such a lesson—but to have him come over and do that meant so much. I thought to myself, "Boy, if that's what this place is like, it's going to be wonderful." I soon learned why they call it a blood sport and felt all the other emotions that happen.

I would pass on to members that those things matter when new members come to this place. That's something we could afford to revisit and place a little more importance on, particularly for the unknown backbenchers who are otherwise insignificant, particularly in the early days. For somebody to go over, any one of you, and you're all well known, and shake a hand like that makes such a huge difference.

It reminds me of a joke that was told to me not long after I was here. I shared it with AL McDonald, I think within a few weeks of his arrival here. I said to him that somebody told me, and I found it to be true, that within the first six months of getting here, every time you sit down you're going to wonder, "How did I ever get here?" and after that you spend the rest of your time trying to figure out how everybody else got here.

I was quite privileged to be Floyd's parliamentary assistant. I won't go into great detail, but those who know Floyd know the kind of person—I didn't know him that well and he gave me phenomenal opportunities, just on trust, and sent me out to speak on his behalf. At the time he was the Deputy Premier as well as the Minister of Finance and I was well known for not following scripted speeches very well. He took enormous risks, but he gave me a lot of support and a lot of room to grow and expand. When you can have that relationship with your minister, if you're a parliamentary assistant, it makes a world of difference, particularly if you have aspirations that you would like a shot at cabinet, to stretch, to see what you can do, as well as to serve in that capacity.

I want to thank Bob Rae. Bob Rae gave me the chance to be a cabinet minister, one of the highlights of my life, and without his making that decision it wouldn't have happened. I want to say thank you to the Honourable Bob Rae for that opportunity.

Many of you were here too for this story. It was one of the funniest moments. It's not going to sound funny now; it's one of those things where you just had to be there, or it just struck me, but I was literally in tears when this happened. It was Al Leach when they were talking about, I think it was a municipal bill, and it had to do with the gas tax and roads and the cost of roads. At one point Bob Rae was really mixing it up with Al Leach, who was the Minister of Municipal Affairs. They were going back and forth and finally Al Leach made the huge mistake of accusing Bob Rae of not knowing what he was talking about. Bob stood up and took a deep breath. I still think to this day that he had waited his whole life for this opportunity, given what they were talking about. I can't deliver it the way it was and I'm paraphrasing, but Bob stood up and he looked at the minister and he said, "I will have you know, sir, that I know exactly what I'm talking about. I am a Rhodes scholar." You had to be there. Actually it was funny, though, for somebody to be a Rhodes scholar and say that.

I also want to take the chance to thank Michele Noble, who was my deputy minister the whole time I was a cabinet minister. Howard has pointed out how difficult a portfolio that can be. I was blessed with an outstanding deputy minister, Michele Noble, who the government in their wisdom made the Deputy Minister of Management Board at an incredibly impossible time. I can imagine what that job was like for her, and she pulled off that job as well as everything else she ever did.

I was also blessed with a phenomenal chief of staff, Darlene Lawson, who came in and shepherded me through. She ultimately went on to work for caucus services. She ran my 1995 re-election campaign, she ran my 1999 election campaign and she's also the campaign manager for my mayoralty campaign. I am pleased with that.

1730

I want to thank the people within the ministry that I had the privilege of being the minister for. I see Mr Sampson here, who will understand working with the correctional officers, the probation and parole officers—incredibly professional people who care about the safety and the citizens of this community. I had a chance to work with the police, firefighters, emergency measures people, as the civilian head of the OPP—phenomenal stress but phenomenal opportunity; Commissioner O'Grady, one of the finest, outstanding police chiefs that this province has ever had. I was privileged and lucky to serve with him.

I've already had a chance to thank all my staff and to thank the people here for what it means to be a member. I lost my train of thought. Oh yes, I wanted to say this because I heard it at a retirement. Frank Moroz got up, and people had thanked him for the sacrifice that he'd made. He got up, and it was the first time that I'd ever heard anybody say this, and it struck me. I thought that at the appropriate time, I'd like to say it too because I think it's true. He said that a lot of people have commended him for the personal sacrifice that he had made to the

labour movement. He said that the sacrifice really wasn't his. The sacrifice was his daughter's when, on her birthday, dad couldn't be there because dad had other responsibilities for the union. He talked about his wife making the sacrifice that, on special occasions that meant everything to the two of them, he couldn't be there because he had to be somewhere else because of his responsibilities. It's true that the family makes the sacrifice because we're off doing what we want to do, the thing that we ran to get here to do. That sacrifice is the family's, not ours. When they accept that and support us, we owe them everything: our love and our support and our thanks.

I'm going to end by saying it has been an incredible honour to serve in all the different ways, but the opportunity to spend the last two years as the Deputy Speaker, having seen this place from there, from the cabinet room, from the opposition benches, and then to see it from here and to try to be non-partisan and to put whatever limited experience I had to this position in serving the tradition of this House and this place has been a distinct honour. I feel grateful that I've had a chance to be in these robes as I take my leave from this place.

I thank all of you for the kind things that you've said. Most of all, I thank all of you for the friendship and time spent together and the fact that collectively, I don't care what side of the House you're on; we all come here for the same reason: to make this a better place to live. I've been blessed to serve at a time with people of your calibre. Thank you all.

Applause.

Hon Mr Baird: Of course, I started my speech and was interrupted by the opposition House leader a few hours ago to do these tributes to people, even though we're likely to be back in the fall anyway. I was hoping to ask for unanimous consent to split the remaining time between the three parties.

The Acting Speaker: I hear agreement. Please continue.

Hon Mr Baird: I'm only going to speak for a brief moment because I know one of my colleagues is going to speak in the rotation, but let me just say to you, I have a huge amount of respect for you. You're a class act. I look forward to the chance of working with you in new responsibilities.

The Acting Speaker: The floor is open for further debate.

Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston): It is somewhat difficult to carry on with the normal business after having heard an afternoon full of tributes to members that are retiring. Just let me say this and take one minute to give you my best wishes and to also say that when those of us who are remaining choose to leave this place, I hope that I can say this when I do leave this place: that you leave this place not forgetting how you got here, but certainly the trappings of office and all the accolades that go with it compare not a whit to if you can leave this place and say you've made some friendships. I think that is the greatest tribute you could have. I say to you, sir, that you can say that and can leave this place

proudly, having made a great number of friendships. I'd like to pass that along, not only to you but to the other members who also take their leave of this assembly.

There is a very short period of time remaining. Getting back to the budget measures, I would like to say that this is indeed a budget of desperation. It is a budget by a government that is desperate to be re-elected. It is a budget that is born out of desperation with a desperate attempt to seek favour with constituents who would seek to re-elect this government. It is a desperate attempt to buy votes. That's the only crass way I can say it, because it deserves that kind of crassness.

How much more cynical can you get than this budget when you think about the measures in this budget with regard to seniors, property taxes and the property tax credit that is being offered to seniors? It is nothing but crass, cynical politics if you get right down to it. At the end of the day it's not an effort to help average seniors or seniors who are living on fixed incomes and having a difficult time of it. This tax measure will help those at the very wealthiest end of the spectrum the most.

I say to the government that if this were a measure designed to help seniors who are living on fixed incomes, designed to help seniors who are having a hard time, then I might support this measure. If there were a cap on this measure, if there were a ceiling, if there were some kind of a means test applied to this, then I might bring myself to support this measure. But nothing like that exists in this budget. It is designed to buy votes. It is designed specifically to curry favour with those who would support this government, people at the highest end of the income spectrum. When we look at mortgage deductibility, for example, it's another crass move on the part of this government to buy votes.

When Ernie Eves was first finance minister, in the first budget I think—yes, it was in 1996—he said regarding mortgage deductibility, “When I presented the costs to the Premier of the day, he asked me what drugs I was on. ‘You can’t go there.’” That’s what he said about mortgage deductibility. Yet what do we see today? This very same then-Minister of Finance, who is now Premier of this province, brings forward something he fundamentally doesn’t believe in and does not believe will work and will be a huge cost to the treasury of this province.

I could go on, but I’m looking at the clock. I’m not certain but it says there’s 39 seconds on the clock. Let me just say this about the budget: it is a crass effort on the part of this government to buy votes with the electorate. An election is coming. This is a budget that’s based on a number of measures that will cost the people of this province in the long run. It’s not designed to help those most in need—people who need home care; we need health care reform. It does nothing to speak to those issues, let alone deal with the problems everyday people are facing.

We do not support this budget measure.

1740

Mr Kormos: This may well be the last Tory time allocation motion that gets debated in this Legislature.

Lord knows there’s been enough of them. It’s as if the last eight years started with a time allocation motion, and how befitting that it ends with a time allocation motion.

If there are members of the press gallery watching or monitoring this part of the session in any way, I want you to know that the Minister of Community, Family and Children’s Services, Brenda Elliott, is in the chamber now. You will have a chance to scrum her when she leaves the chamber, presumably in about 20 minutes at 6 o’clock. This is an alert to members of the press gallery who weren’t able to speak to the Minister of Community, Family and Children’s Services earlier. Lord knows they waited for her. They waited and waited. An alert to the press gallery: the Minister of Community, Family and Children’s Services is in the chamber now. I would suggest that the press gallery monitor all exits, including cowards’ alley, which is where we suspect she scurried down earlier today.

I’m asking the press gallery to please pay attention. This is an important issue. This could be the last opportunity for members of the press gallery to talk to the Honourable Brenda Elliott, Minister of Community, Family and Children’s Services, who I am telling you now is in the chamber as I speak and will be leaving the chamber at some point in the next 20 minutes. The press gallery will monitor the exit points from the chamber so that they can interview her and speak with her.

I would suggest as well that the press gallery monitor the elevators up on the third and fourth floors, which are becoming an exit route for cabinet ministers who don’t wish to speak to the press. The press is well aware of the notorious cowards’ alley, which is the back lane from the government gallery to the exit point down by the Premier’s office. The press gallery cannot confront those members when they leave the government members’ lounge.

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): Did you ever use that, Peter?

Mr Kormos: I still haven’t been given a tour of it. I don’t know what happens. I think we should include that in tours of Queen’s Park. They should show them the little charred piece of wood out in front of the doors to the chamber and then show them cowards’ alley, where cabinet ministers zip away and out of the focus of the lenses of the press gallery, be they still or video.

Starting on a time allocation motion and, eight years later, ending on time allocation motions—this government has never seen a bill that it didn’t want to close debate on. This government has never met a piece of legislation that they don’t want to time-allocate. This government has never had an interest in full and thorough debate on a bill. Indeed, over the course of the last number of years, I don’t even think we’ve had third reading debate on a single bill.

Interjections.

Mr Kormos: What shocks me and rots my socks, let me tell you, is now we have all these little government members saying, “Oh, pass my bill, pass my bill.” No. If you guys want your bills passed, you wait until the

government returns on the fourth Monday of September, and then the government can devote as much time as it's inclined to to passage of private members' public business.

Mr Baird, the government House leader, is here. Government backbenchers, prevail upon Mr Baird to get your bills presented as government business. It's as simple as that. We've done it before. Mr Baird is your House leader.

Members of the press gallery, Mrs Elliott is in the chamber now. Please guard all exit points.

Ask Mr Baird if you want private members' public business passed, because Mr Baird as House leader can call your bill, should it be considered worthy of calling by the government House leader, and have it presented for third reading or second reading, whatever the case might be, and then it will be put to a vote. You then have the responsibility to persuade your colleagues to vote for it, because assuming that your colleagues are here, you have a majority and your bill will carry. That's how bills get passed. You don't say to the House leader for the NDP, "Oh, please let my bill pass." No. You present your bill and let it go through process.

I've said "please" all week about Bill 110, a holiday for workers on Monday so they can have a long weekend too. I've said "please" every day. What do I get from the government? "No." Well, no holiday? Fine. No bills. It's as simple as that. I've asked for support for my bills; you've denied it. Don't you dare ask for support for yours.

The Acting Speaker: The floor is open for further debate.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): After such a nice afternoon in this place, leave it to my friend from Niagara Centre to bring the debate level down again to the partisan level.

Mr Kormos: I did my best.

Mr Maves: I say to him that he doesn't know about some of the routes on this side of the House that cabinet ministers may take the odd time because he wasn't cabinet minister long enough to discover them, I don't think.

Anyhow, Mr Speaker, during your speech and speeches earlier in the day—I wanted to make a couple of comments in my four minutes about some of the members leaving. I've spoken about Conway and Carr. He's a better hockey player than anything else, so I think it's fitting he's going back to hockey. Snobelen is not going to be with us again. He was a great member, a very humorous and intelligent member. There's McLeod, Cleary, and my seatmate and a member I sat on the public accounts committee with, Mr Hastings. Today I'm surprised he did not say "bloody bureaucrats" in his closing speech. It's a phrase we've all come to know and love him for.

I want to thank Hodgson very much. I looked up to him for many years. He's been very helpful to me, especially in Niagara Falls with the casino when he was

in charge of gaming in the province. I want to thank Chris.

Mr Speaker, you mentioned a story about Mr Nixon and a comment he made, someone from the opposite party, after your first speech. I want to remind you that when I was a new member back in 1996-97, I was parliamentary assistant for labour. You and I travelled on Workers' Compensation Board system reform. You were the labour critic, as you mentioned. I was the point person, as the parliamentary assistant for labour. Everywhere we went, for two solid weeks we were followed by organized labour in a bus, injured workers in a bus. Everywhere we went, when we started out for that morning's session, they had a half-hour parade of flowers to the Chair's desk and interrupted the proceedings. Every now and then they'd speak, and they were often the same speeches. They'd start a ruckus in the room, and you never failed to raise the temperature of the room. I used to sit across and say, "That so-and-so. He had a chance to calm things down because they're all looking at him for leadership, and he kept raising the temperature of that room."

I remember that after one of those occasions when I was particularly cross with you, we got on a flight to Ottawa. We landed in Ottawa and I got in a cab. All of a sudden, before the cab could pull away from the curb, who opened the door and jumped in but you. I thought to myself, "I have to ride with this guy to the hotel?" I looked at you and you kind of smiled at me and you said, "Sorry about that. That's my job." Then you smiled with a big broad smile, slapped me on the knee and said, "So how are you liking it so far?" So I got the message. I understood some of the politics versus the non-partisan friendship that happens in the place.

I will say that at the end of that tour, you gave me a compliment I've never forgotten and always appreciated. You took me aside when we landed back in Toronto after our last meeting and said to me, "I just want to extend my congratulations to you. As the point person for the government, I thought you handled that whole two weeks very well." That was a compliment I was surprised to get, but very appreciative of. It was something I've never forgotten.

I will always remember in my days in politics that you took the time, as an opposition member who gave me such a hard time, to talk to me about the job I had done. I thank you for that. So maybe what Mr Nixon did for you in your opening speech stuck with you, and you were able to do something similar for another young member of the Legislature. I appreciate it. I thank you and I wish you the best of luck.

I will say one last thing about you. You've been a very good Speaker when you've been in the chair. I believe this place is kept in best order when—I think it's the Speaker who sets the tone and I think it's very possible for this place to stay in good order when the Speaker in the chair sets the tone. We're all afraid of you. We don't want to get thrown out by you. You've always done a very good job of keeping order.

So to all of my colleagues that are leaving, to the Speaker, to Hodgson, Cleary, McLeod, Carr, Conway, Snobelen and Hastings, thank you, everyone, congratulations and best of luck.

The Acting Speaker: Of all the things said today, that one will resonate also. Thank you for taking the time.

We are now at the point where the time for debate has expired. We have the motion from Mr Baird, which is government notice of motion 57. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1750 to 1800.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Guzzo, Garry J.	Newman, Dan
Baird, John R.	Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Hastings, John	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Chudleigh, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Runciman, Robert W.
Clark, Brad	Jackson, Cameron	Sampson, Rob
Clement, Tony	Johns, Helen	Spina, Joseph
Coburn, Brian	Johnson, Bert	Sterling, Norman W.
Cunningham, Dianne	Klees, Frank	Stewart, R. Gary

DeFaria, Carl
Ecker, Janet
Elliott, Brenda
Flaherty, Jim
Galt, Doug
Gilchrist, Steve
Gill, Raminder

Maves, Bart
Mazzilli, Frank
McDonald, AL
Miller, Norm
Molinari, Tina R.
Munro, Julia
Mushinski, Marilyn

Tsubouchi, David H.
Turnbull, David
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Wood, Bob
Young, David

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed to the motion will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Cordiano, Joseph	Martel, Shelley
Bartolucci, Rick	Curling, Alvin	Martin, Tony
Bisson, Gilles	Dombrowsky, Leona	Peters, Steve
Boyer, Claudette	Duncan, Dwight	Phillips, Gerry
Bryant, Michael	Gravelle, Michael	Prue, Michael
Caplan, David	Kennedy, Gerard	Ruprecht, Tony
Churley, Marilyn	Kormos, Peter	Sorbara, Greg
Colle, Mike	Marchese, Rosario	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 45; the nays are 23.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It now being after 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45 this evening.

The House adjourned at 1802.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Arnott, Ted (PC)	Waterloo-Wellington	Parliamentary assistant to the Deputy Premier and Minister of Education / adjoint parlementaire à la vice-première ministre et ministre de l'Éducation
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Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture and Food / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation
Bartolucci, Rick (L)	Sudbury	Deputy opposition House leader / chef parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition
Beaubien, Marcel (PC)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre des Finances
Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Chief New Democratic Party whip / whip en chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Bountrogianni, Marie (L)	Hamilton Mountain	
Boyer, Claudette (Ind)	Ottawa-Vanier	
Bradley, James J. (L)	St Catharines	
Brown, Michael A. (L)	Algoma-Manitoulin	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Bryant, Michael (L)	St Paul's	
Caplan, David (L)	Don Valley East / -Est	Deputy opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition
Carr, Hon / L'hon Gary (PC)	Oakville	Speaker / Président
Christopherson, David (ND)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre des Finances
Churley, Marilyn (ND)	Toronto-Danforth	
Clark, Hon / L'hon Brad (PC)	Stoney Creek	Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Cleary, John C. (L)	Stormont-Dundas- Charlottenburgh	
Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC)	Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Coburn, Hon / L'hon Brian (PC)	Ottawa-Orléans	Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs
Colle, Mike (L)	Eglinton-Lawrence	
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Crozier, Bruce (L)	Essex	

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Curling, Alvin (L)	Scarborough-Rouge River	
DeFaria, Hon / L'hon Carl (PC)	Mississauga East / -Est	Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Affaires civiques, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Sarnia-Lambton	
Dombrowsky, Leona (L)	Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	
Duncan, Dwight (L)	Windsor-St Clair	Opposition House leader / chef parlementaire de l'opposition
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / -Nord	Parliamentary assistant to the Premier and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / adjoint parlementaire au premier ministre et ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC)	Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances
Elliott, Hon / L'hon Brenda (PC)	Guelph-Wellington	Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services / ministre des Services à la collectivité, à la famille et à l'enfance
Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie (PC)	Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey	Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC)	Whitby-Ajax	Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation / ministre de l'Entreprise, des Débouchés et de l'Innovation
Galt, Hon / L'hon Doug (PC)	Northumberland	Minister without Portfolio, chief government whip / ministre sans portefeuille, whip en chef du gouvernement
Gerretsen, John (L)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	
Gilchrist, Steve (PC)	Scarborough East / -Est	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de l'Environnement
Gill, Raminder (PC)	Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale	Parliamentary assistant to the Premier and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / adjoint parlementaire au premier ministre et ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
Gravelle, Michael (L)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / -Nord	
Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	
Hampton, Howard (ND)	Kenora-Rainy River	Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Hardeman, Hon / L'hon Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre associé des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Hastings, John (PC)	Etobicoke North / -Nord	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Affaires civiques, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Hodgson, Chris (PC)	Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	
Hoy, Pat (L)	Chatham-Kent Essex	
Hudak, Hon / L'hon Tim (PC)	Erie-Lincoln	Minister of Consumer and Business Services / ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises
Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Burlington	
Johns, Hon / L'hon Helen (PC)	Huron-Bruce	Minister of Agriculture and Food / ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation
Johnson, Bert (PC)	Perth-Middlesex	Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Kells, Morley (PC)	Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Kennedy, Gerard (L)	Parkdale-High Park	
Klees, Hon / L'hon Frank (PC)	Oak Ridges	Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Kormos, Peter (ND)	Niagara Centre / -Centre	New Democratic Party House leader / chef parlementaire du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Kwinter, Monte (L)	York Centre / -Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	
Levac, Dave (L)	Brant	
Marchese, Rosario (ND)	Trinity-Spadina	
Marland, Margaret (PC)	Mississauga South / -Sud	
Martel, Shelley (ND)	Nickel Belt	
Martin, Tony (ND)	Sault Ste Marie	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Maves, Bart (PC)	Niagara Falls	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Transports
Mazzilli, Frank (PC)	London-Fanshawe	Parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General and Minister responsible for Native Affairs / adjoint parlementaire au procureur général et ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
McDonald, AL (PC)	Nipissing	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de l'Entreprise, des Débouchés et de l'Innovation
McGuinty, Dalton (L)	Ottawa South / -Sud	Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition
McLeod, Lyn (L)	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	
McMeekin, Ted (L)	Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough- Aldershot	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound-Muskoka	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Molinari, Hon / L'hon Tina R. (PC)	Thornhill	Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre associée des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Munro, Julia (PC)	York North / -Nord	Parliamentary assistant to the Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet and Minister of Culture / adjointe parlementaire au président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement et ministre de la Culture
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment and government House leader / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de l'Environnement et leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities and Minister responsible for Women's Issues / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités et ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Newman, Hon / L'hon Dan (PC)	Scarborough Southwest / -Sud-Ouest	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre associé de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
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Ouellette, Hon / L'hon Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Parsons, Ernie (L)	Prince Edward-Hastings	
Patten, Richard (L)	Ottawa Centre / -Centre	
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Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Davenport	
Sampson, Rob (PC)	Mississauga Centre / -Centre	
Sergio, Mario (L)	York West / -Ouest	Deputy opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition
Smitherman, George (L)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	
Sorbara, Greg (L)	Vaughan-King-Aurora	
Spina, Joseph (PC)	Brampton Centre / -Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Travail
Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC)	Lanark-Carleton	Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Peterborough	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Richesses naturelles
Stockwell, Chris (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / -Centre	
Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Consumer and Business Services / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises
Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC)	Markham	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture / président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement, ministre de la Culture
Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC)	Don Valley West / -Ouest	Associate Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation / ministre associé de l'Entreprise, des Débouchés et de l'Innovation
Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Tourism and Recreation / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs
Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Minister of the Environment / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines, ministre de l'Environnement
Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Deputy Premier, Minister of Education / vice-première ministre, ministre de l'Éducation
Wood, Bob (PC)	London West / -Ouest	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Public Safety and Security / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Sécurité et de la Sécurité publique
Young, Hon / L'hon David (PC)	Willowdale	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
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of Ontario

Fourth Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Quatrième session, 37^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 26 June 2003

Jeudi 26 juin 2003



Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 26 June 2003

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

APPOINTMENT OF PROVINCIAL AUDITOR

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, Government House Leader): I would like to ask for unanimous consent to move a motion without notice with respect to the Provincial Auditor.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Baird: I move that a panel be established for the purposes of selecting the next Provincial Auditor, such panel to be made up of one member chosen from each party by its respective House leader and chaired by Speaker Carr. The panel shall determine the selection and interview process to be followed and shall conduct interviews. The director of human resources of the Office of the Assembly shall provide administrative support and advice to the panel and shall be present at the interviews. In the event that Speaker Carr is unable to chair the panel at any point in its deliberations, the panel shall continue with the selection process, deciding all questions with unanimous agreement. The panel shall report to the House its recommended candidate for Provincial Auditor.

The Speaker: Thank you, sir.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispense?

Interjection.

The Speaker: You would like to hear it? OK.

Mr Baird has moved that a panel be established for the purposes of selecting the next Provincial Auditor, such panel to be made up of one member chosen from each party by its respective House leader and chaired by Speaker Carr. The panel shall determine the selection and interview process to be followed and shall conduct the interviews. The director of human resources of the Office of the Assembly shall provide administrative support and advice to the panel and shall be present at the interviews. In the event that Speaker Carr is unable to chair the panel at any point in its deliberations, the panel shall continue with the selection process, deciding all questions with unanimous agreement. The panel shall report to the House its recommended candidate for Provincial Auditor.

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 26 juin 2003

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Hon Mr Baird: I seek unanimous consent to put a motion concerning orders for second and third readings of private bills.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

CONSIDERATION OF BILLS

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, Government House Leader): I move that we call the orders for second and third readings of Bill Pr12, Bill Pr14, Bill Pr18, Bill Pr20, Bill Pr21 and Bill Pr23 so that they may be moved concurrently and without further debate or amendment, and that in the case of any division on any of these bills, the division bells shall be limited to five minutes.

If you want a break to discuss this, I'm happy.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: My understanding is that the members who sponsored the bills will have the opportunity—do I understand that properly?

Hon Mr Baird: Yes.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Mr Baird has moved—dispense?

Hon Mr Baird: Dispense.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

1850

MUNICIPALITY OF CHATHAM-KENT ACT, 2003

Mr Baird, on behalf of Mr Beaubien, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr12, An Act respecting the Municipality of Chatham-Kent.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Baird, on behalf of Mr Beaubien, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr12, An Act respecting the Municipality of Chatham-Kent.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

REDEEMER UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE ACT, 2003

Mr Jackson moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr14, An Act respecting Redeemer University College.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Jackson moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr14, An Act respecting Redeemer University College.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would just like to acknowledge the presence this evening of Dr Justin Cooper, president of Redeemer University College; Mr Jacob Ellens, vice-president of academics; and Mr John Vriend, director of teacher education.

COUNTY OF HALIBURTON ACT, 2003

Mr Baird, on behalf of Mr Hodgson, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr18, An Act respecting the County of Haliburton.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Baird, on behalf of Mr Hodgson, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr18, An Act respecting the County of Haliburton.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

THUNDER BAY COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION ACT, 2003

Mr Gravelle moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr20, An Act respecting The Thunder Bay Foundation.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Gravelle moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr20, An Act respecting The Thunder Bay Foundation.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

TYNDALE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
& SEMINARY ACT, 2003

Mrs Cunningham, on behalf of Mr Dunlop, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr21, An Act respecting Tyndale College & Seminary (formerly Ontario Bible College and Ontario Theological Seminary).

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mrs Cunningham, on behalf of Mr Dunlop, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr21, An Act respecting Tyndale College & Seminary (formerly Ontario Bible College and Ontario Theological Seminary).

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to introduce Dr Brian Stiller, Dr Earl Davey and Ms Ruth Whitt, who are here this evening and who should be congratulated for the wonderful work they do with students at Tyndale College & Seminary.

We're very pleased that this has happened to them.

KITCHENER-WATERLOO
FOUNDATION ACT, 2003

Mr Wettlaufer moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr23, An Act respecting The Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Wettlaufer moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr23, An Act respecting The Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I want to take this opportunity to actually thank a couple of government members for something we've been working on for some time. The Canadian Hearing Society in the community of Timmins was scheduled for closure, as their Trillium funding was coming to an end this August. Along with the Canadian Hearing Society's Timmins office and their central office in Sudbury, we've been working with Mr Dan Newman, the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, and Mr Tony Clement, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, and I'm pleased to say they have come through for the community of Timmins. The Canadian Hearing Society will be staying open, and they have

received funding for yet another year. So I'd like to thank them on behalf of the constituents of Timmins.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to allow Mr Guzzo to put a motion for second and third reading of his private member's bill, Bill 45, An Act to establish a commission to inquire into the investigations by police forces of complaints of sexual abuse against minors in the Cornwall area.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

Mr Duncan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent for Mr Gill to put a motion for third reading of his bill, Bill 2, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to restrict the conveyance of passengers for compensation.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent regarding Bill 2? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to put second and third reading of Bill 124, the Ontario Heritage Amendment Act, without further debate.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to request unanimous consent to reappoint the very capable Ann Cavoukian as the Information and Privacy Commissioner for a term of five years.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

Hon Frank Klees (Minister of Transportation): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to seek unanimous consent for second and third reading of Bill 20, the Road Safety Act.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

Mr Duncan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to seek unanimous consent to put a motion that would allow Bill 20, the Road Safety Act, and Bill 124, the Ontario Heritage Act, to be sent to committee after first reading for committee discussion and public input over the summer.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

Hon Mr Baird: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to seek unanimous consent that, notwithstanding standing order 46(e), the order for second and third reading of Bill 41 be called.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

1900

Hon Mr Baird: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to seek unanimous consent to pass a motion to strike a non-partisan select committee to study the Crawford Report.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: As you know, in the fourth session of the 37th Parliament I brought forward a very important bill, Bill 2, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to restrict the conveyance of passengers for compensation. It's a very important act. I lobbied all the different members across and I suppose by now they are going to give me unanimous consent—the Liberals and the NDP will. So I seek unanimous consent to pass third reading without debate of Bill 2.

The Speaker: I'm afraid we just asked for that. We didn't get unanimous consent.

Hon Mr Baird: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I understand that His Honour awaits.

His Honour the Administrator of Ontario entered the chamber of the Legislative Assembly and took his seat upon the throne.

ROYAL ASSENT
SANCTION ROYALE

Hon Roy McMurtry (Administrator): Pray be seated.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): May it please Your Honour, the Legislative Assembly of the province has, at its present meetings thereof, passed certain bills to which, in the name of and on behalf of the said Legislative Assembly, I respectfully request Your Honour's assent.

Deputy Clerk (Ms Deborah Deller): The following are the titles of the bills to which Your Honour's assent is prayed:

Bill 23, An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 and the Municipal Franchises Act in respect of consumer protection, the governance of the Ontario Energy Board and other matters / *Projet de loi 23, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario et la Loi sur les concessions municipales en ce qui a trait à la protection des consommateurs, à la régie de la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario et à d'autres questions.*

Bill 43, An Act to provide Ontario home property tax relief for seniors / *Projet de loi 43, Loi prévoyant un allègement de l'impôt foncier résidentiel pour les personnes âgées de l'Ontario.*

Bill 53, An Act respecting the equity in education tax credit / *Projet de loi 53, Loi concernant le crédit d'impôt pour l'équité en matière d'éducation.*

Bill 100, An Act respecting the Kawartha Highlands Signature Site Park / *Projet de loi 100, Loi concernant le parc de la région caractéristique des Hautes-Terres de Kawartha.*

Bill Pr12, An Act respecting the Municipality of Chatham-Kent.

Bill Pr14, An Act respecting Redeemer University College.

Bill Pr18, An Act respecting the County of Haliburton.

Bill Pr20, An Act respecting The Thunder Bay Foundation.

Bill Pr21, An Act respecting Tyndale College & Seminary (formerly Ontario Bible College and Ontario Theological Seminary).

Bill Pr23, An Act respecting The Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation.

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): In Her Majesty's name, His Honour the Administrator doth assent to these bills.

Au nom de Sa Majesté, Son Honneur l'administrateur sanctionne ces projets de loi.

His Honour was then pleased to retire.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, Government House Leader): Before I move adjournment of the House, we acknowledged the pages, we acknowledged a number of retiring members; it's also the last day of ser-

vice of Philip De Souza, the team leader of the ushers. I wanted on behalf of all members to wish him the very best.

Mr Bob Wood (London West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I ask unanimous consent for second reading and referral to the justice committee of Bill 4, An Act to proclaim Genocide Memorial Week in Ontario.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

Hon Mr Baird: I move adjournment of the House.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This House stands adjourned until September 22, 2003.

The House adjourned at 1912.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon James K. Bartleman

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Agostino, Dominic (L)	Hamilton East / -Est	Chief opposition whip / whip en chef de l'opposition
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Waterloo-Wellington	Parliamentary assistant to the Deputy Premier and Minister of Education / adjoint parlementaire à la vice-première ministre et ministre de l'Éducation
Baird, Hon / L'hon John R. (PC)	Nepean-Carleton	Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, government House leader / ministre de l'Énergie, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones, parlementaire du gouvernement
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture and Food / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation
Bartolucci, Rick (L)	Sudbury	Deputy opposition House leader / chef parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition
Beaubien, Marcel (PC)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre des Finances
Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Chief New Democratic Party whip / whip en chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Bountrogianni, Marie (L)	Hamilton Mountain	
Boyer, Claudette (Ind)	Ottawa-Vanier	
Bradley, James J. (L)	St Catharines	
Brown, Michael A. (L)	Algoma-Manitoulin	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Bryant, Michael (L)	St Paul's	
Caplan, David (L)	Don Valley East / -Est	Deputy opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition
Carr, Hon / L'hon Gary (PC)	Oakville	Speaker / Président
Christopherson, David (ND)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre des Finances
Churley, Marilyn (ND)	Toronto-Danforth	
Clark, Hon / L'hon Brad (PC)	Stoney Creek	Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Cleary, John C. (L)	Stormont-Dundas- Charlottenburgh	
Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC)	Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Coburn, Hon / L'hon Brian (PC)	Ottawa-Orléans	Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs
Colle, Mike (L)	Eglinton-Lawrence	
Conway, Sean G. (L)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	
Cordiano, Joseph (L)	York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	
Crozier, Bruce (L)	Essex	
Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Curling, Alvin (L)	Scarborough-Rouge River	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
DeFaria, Hon / L'hon Carl (PC)	Mississauga East / -Est	Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Affaires civiques, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Sarnia-Lambton	
Dombrowsky, Leona (L)	Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	
Duncan, Dwight (L)	Windsor-St Clair	Opposition House leader / chef parlementaire de l'opposition
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / -Nord	Parliamentary assistant to the Premier and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / adjoint parlementaire au premier ministre et ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC)	Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances
Elliott, Hon / L'hon Brenda (PC)	Guelph-Wellington	Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services / ministre des Services à la collectivité, à la famille et à l'enfance
Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie (PC)	Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey	Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC)	Whitby-Ajax	Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation / ministre de l'Entreprise, des Débouchés et de l'Innovation
Galt, Hon / L'hon Doug (PC)	Northumberland	Minister without Portfolio, chief government whip / ministre sans portefeuille, whip en chef du gouvernement
Gerretsen, John (L)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	
Gilchrist, Steve (PC)	Scarborough East / -Est	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de l'Environnement
Gill, Raminder (PC)	Bramalea-Gore- Malton-Springdale	Parliamentary assistant to the Premier and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / adjoint parlementaire au premier ministre et ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
Gravelle, Michael (L)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / -Nord	
Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	
Hampton, Howard (ND)	Kenora-Rainy River	Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Hardeman, Hon / L'hon Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre associé des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Hastings, John (PC)	Etobicoke North / -Nord	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Affaires civiques, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Hodgson, Chris (PC)	Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	
Hoy, Pat (L)	Chatham-Kent Essex	
Hudak, Hon / L'hon Tim (PC)	Erie-Lincoln	Minister of Consumer and Business Services / ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises
Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Burlington	
Johns, Hon / L'hon Helen (PC)	Huron-Bruce	Minister of Agriculture and Food / ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation
Johnson, Bert (PC)	Perth-Middlesex	Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Kells, Morley (PC)	Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Kennedy, Gerard (L)	Parkdale-High Park	
Klees, Hon / L'hon Frank (PC)	Oak Ridges	Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Kormos, Peter (ND)	Niagara Centre / -Centre	New Democratic Party House leader / chef parlementaire du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Kwinter, Monte (L)	York Centre / -Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Levac, Dave (L)	Brant	
Marchese, Rosario (ND)	Trinity-Spadina	
Marland, Margaret (PC)	Mississauga South / -Sud	
Martel, Shelley (ND)	Nickel Belt	
Martin, Tony (ND)	Sault Ste Marie	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Maves, Bart (PC)	Niagara Falls	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Transports
Mazzilli, Frank (PC)	London-Fanshawe	Parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General and Minister responsible for Native Affairs / adjoint parlementaire au procureur général et ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
McDonald, AL (PC)	Nipissing	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de l'Entreprise, des Débouchés et de l'Innovation
McGuinty, Dalton (L)	Ottawa South / -Sud	Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition
McLeod, Lyn (L)	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	
McMeekin, Ted (L)	Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough- Aldershot	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound-Muskoka	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Molinari, Hon / L'hon Tina R. (PC)	Thornhill	Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre associée des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Munro, Julia (PC)	York North / -Nord	Parliamentary assistant to the Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet and Minister of Culture / adjointe parlementaire au président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement et ministre de la Culture
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment and government House leader / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de l'Environnement et leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities and Minister responsible for Women's Issues / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités et ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Newman, Hon / L'hon Dan (PC)	Scarborough Southwest / -Sud-Ouest	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre associé de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
O'Toole, John R. (PC)	Durham	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Ouellette, Hon / L'hon Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Parsons, Ernie (L)	Prince Edward-Hastings	
Patten, Richard (L)	Ottawa Centre / -Centre	
Peters, Steve (L)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	
Phillips, Gerry (L)	Scarborough-Agincourt	
Prue, Michael (ND)	Beaches-East York	
Pupatello, Sandra (L)	Windsor West / -Ouest	
Ramsay, David (L)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC)	Leeds-Grenville	Minister of Public Safety and Security / ministre de la Sécurité et de la Sécurité publique
Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Davenport	
Sampson, Rob (PC)	Mississauga Centre / -Centre	
Sergio, Mario (L)	York West / -Ouest	Deputy opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition
Smitherman, George (L)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	
Sorbara, Greg (L)	Vaughan-King-Aurora	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Spina, Joseph (PC)	Brampton Centre / -Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Travail
Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC)	Lanark-Carleton	Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Peterborough	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Richesses naturelles
Stockwell, Chris (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / -Centre	
Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Consumer and Business Services / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises
Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC)	Markham	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture / président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement, ministre de la Culture
Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC)	Don Valley West / -Ouest	Associate Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation / ministre associé de l'Entreprise, des Débouchés et de l'Innovation
Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Tourism and Recreation / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs
Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Minister of the Environment / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines, ministre de l'Environnement
Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Deputy Premier, Minister of Education / vice-première ministre, ministre de l'Éducation
Wood, Bob (PC)	London West / -Ouest	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Public Safety and Security / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Sécurité et de la Sécurité publique
Young, Hon / L'hon David (PC)	Willowdale	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Vacant	Mississauga West / -Ouest	

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Alvin Curling
Gilles Bisson, Ted Chudleigh, Alvin Curling,
Gerard Kennedy, Frank Mazzilli, Norm Miller,
John R. O'Toole, Steve Peters
Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Finance and economic affairs / Finances et affaires économiques

Chair / Président: Joseph Spina
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Ted Arnott
Ted Arnott, Marcel Beaubien,
David Christopherson, Monte Kwinter,
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Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

General government / Affaires gouvernementales

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Garfield Dunlop, Steve Gilchrist, Dave Levac,
Norm Miller, R. Gary Stewart, Wayne Wettlaufer
Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

Government agencies / Organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: James J. Bradley
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Michael Gravelle
James J. Bradley, Leona Dombrowsky, Michael Gravelle,
Bert Johnson, Tony Martin, Frank Mazzilli,
Wayne Wettlaufer, Bob Wood
Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

Justice and Social Policy / Justice et affaires sociales

Chair / Présidente: Toby Barrett
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: AL McDonald
Toby Barrett, Marcel Beaubien, Michael Bryant,
Garry J. Guzzo, Ernie Hardeman,
Peter Kormos, AL McDonald, Lyn McLeod
Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Legislative Assembly / Assemblée législative

Chair / Présidente: Margaret Marland
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Julia Munro
Caroline Di Cocco, Jean-Marc Lalonde,
Margaret Marland, Bart Maves,
Julia Munro, Marilyn Mushinski,
Michael Prue, Joseph N. Tascona
Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

Public accounts / Comptes publics

Chair / Président: John Gerretsen
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Bruce Crozier
Bruce Crozier, Garfield Dunlop,
John Gerretsen, Raminder Gill,
John Hastings, Shelley Martel,
AL McDonald, Richard Patten,
Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

Regulations and private bills / Règlements et projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Rosario Marchese
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Garfield Dunlop
Gilles Bisson, Claudette Boyer, Garfield Dunlop,
Raminder Gill, Pat Hoy, Morley Kells, Rosario Marchese, Ted
McMeekin, Bill Murdoch, Wayne Wettlaufer
Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

These lists appear in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month. A list arranged by riding appears when space permits.

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